# From *Giacinta* to *Rassegnazione*

## The Critique of Post-*Risorgimento* Ideologies in the Novels of Luigi Capuana

Paul Barnaby

PhD
University of Edinburgh
1997

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by the undersigned and does not represent the work of any other person.

## Abstract

This study challenges the prevalent perception of Luigi Capuana as the passive reflector of ideological crisis. It argues that he does not move from optimistic positivism to a disorientated, ahistorical neo-idealism. Far from being shaken by new cultural stimuli and by mounting opposition to the liberal state, he presents a lucid critique of both positivism and the idealist reaction. From an essentially Hegelian perspective, he demonstrates how each divides the self, divorcing subject from object and mind from body. Capuana, this study argues, looks beyond the post-*Risorgimento* settlement to a 'synthetic' age.

An ideological discourse is traced through Capuana's five novels. *Giacinta* rejects the lay fatalism and objectivity of naturalism for an epistemology which stresses liberation through self-knowledge, transcendence of environmental and cultural determinants, and abolition of the subject/object dichotomy. *Profumo* shows how secular positivism inherits the dualism of Catholicism: protagonists are led to recognize their repressive ideological inheritance and to seek synthesis. In *La sfinge*, however, faith in the possibility of synthesis falters. In the discredited liberal state, positivism deteriorates into a debilitating spirit of analysis, and dualistic idealism re-emerges as decadentism. In this ideological climate, Capuana's protagonists remain stranded in the divided self. *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* cautiously reaffirms the possibility of synthesis, portraying a protagonist struggling to overcome a master-slave ideology where mind and body stand in the same relationship as feudal lord and subject. Finally acknowledging his origins in the land and the people, he prefigures a new political settlement implicitly located within a problematic future. Finally, *Rassegnazione*, confronts D'Annunzian *superomismo*, censuring its futile exaltation of the will and dehumanizing dualism. It is set against alternative modes of idealism: Schopenhauerian aestheticism and a Hegelian location of the ideal within the real. Ultimately, however, each is presented ironically and D'Annunzio's art-in-life is not

definitively dismissed. Capuana's ideological discourse ends with an open question.

Tracing Capuana's ideological itinerary, this study rejects four common criticisms of his fiction. *Firstly*, it argues that Capuana creates a convincing nexus between protagonists and milieu. His novels have a dialectic structure where milieu and secondary character represent thesis and antithesis, or instructive synthesis. Backdrop is essentially allegorical and increasingly bears mythical and literary subtexts. *Secondly*, it argues that, for Capuana, the ideological outweighs the physiological. He does not study his characters *in vitro*, but dramatizes their ideological inheritance within an allegorical landscape. *Thirdly*, it shows that Capuana does not partake of positivist or idealist misogyny. His female protagonists are eloquently trapped between a positivism which views woman as neurotic animal and an idealism which sees her as alternately instrument of nature and spiritual being. *Finally*, this study rejects the charge that Capuana retreats from history to subjective experience. It reveals, rather, an engaged cultural analyst who demonstrates how contending ideologies fragment both the psyche and the body politic.

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

The last thirty years have seen a comprehensive reappraisal of the work of Luigi Capuana. Where Croceian critics had perceived a creative artist stifled by a theorist, recent commentators have argued that, in both his criticism and narrative, Capuana coherently mediates the lessons of French naturalist literature and European positivist thought. He has been identified as the most rigorous and influential theorist of *verismo* and as an articulate advocate of the progressive positivism of the post-*Risorgimento* bourgeoisie. The overdue recognition of Capuana's role as engaged intellectual and cultural operator has, however, ultimately produced a distorted interpretation of his narrative. By overstating positivist and naturalist elements in his work of the 1870s and 1880s, critics have been led to regret, in Capuana's post-1890 production, a disorientated compromise with idealism which reflects the crisis of positivism and of the Unitary state. The very effort to present an integrated view of Capuana's diverse literary activities (necessary after decades of impressionistic and piecemeal commentary) has, moreover, militated against the close reading of individual texts. It has recently been argued that Capuana's shorter fiction has suffered most from the limitations of prevailing critical perspectives,[1] and it is certainly true that the *novelle* of the 1890s have been persistently neglected. In this study, however, I shall argue that Capuana's five novels, *Giacinta* (1879), *Profumo* (1890), *La sfinge* (1895), *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* (1901), and *Rassegnazione* (1907), have been most seriously misrepresented.[2] We shall see that the latter three, in particular, have been too hastily dismissed as concessions to an idealist reaction. We shall discover in Capuana neither an apostle nor a reflector of prevailing ideologies but a lucid analyst of a changing cultural and political milieu. Before going on to identify those areas where Capuana critically engages with both positivist and idealist thought, we must first examine more closely earlier views of his itinerary as a novelist.

* * * *

Croceian critics censure Capuana for an attempt to import the alien element of positivist science into the autonomous world of art. In their analysis, the rigorous application of determinist psychology impairs creative liberty and betrays a failure of lyrical intuition.[3] They interpret the theory of impersonality as a studied indifference on the author's part which is inevitably communicated to the reader. For most Croceians, however, Capuana eventually abandons mechanistic naturalism. Early Croceian commentators welcome an espousal of the refined *psychologisme* of Bourget, detecting, in novels such as *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* and *Rassegnazione*, the rehabilitation of the non-naturalist categories of will and conscience. Later Croceians, conversely, praise less the neo-idealism of the final novels than the concrete regionalism of Capuana's short stories of Sicilian peasant life.[4] For these critics, Capuana's intimate knowledge of and profound sympathy for his characters wean him from dogmatic French naturalism to a 'healthy' national realism. Of his novels, however, they judge only *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* an entirely successful marriage of psychological case-study and vividly evoked Sicilian milieu.[5] For both early and late Croceians, Capuana similarly overcomes the influence of Zola in his critical writings, reverting, in *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei* (1898) and *Cronache letterarie* (1899), to the thought of De Sanctis.[6] His critical strengths are represented as loathing for the abstract and cerebral, hostility to moral or civic agendas, scepticism toward schools or programmes, and tolerance of all form-engendering content. He is particularly applauded as an opponent of decadent subjectivity.

Croceian approaches dominate discussion of Capuana until the late 1960s.[7] There is, of course, little critical interest in *verismo* during the Fascist *ventennio,* and Capuana's perceived indifference to the social and political situation of Sicily ensures that he is largely excluded from the immediate post-War Marxist rehabilitation of the *veristi.* There are, nonetheless, reappraisals of his criticism from a Marxist perspective. Gaetano Trombatore

first insists that the *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea* (1880-82) are not, as for Croceian critics, an uncritical reflection of Zola's thought but are central to the development of an autonomously Italian naturalist aesthetic.[8] For Trombatore and, later, Roberto Bigazzi (1969), Capuana's post-1890 criticism, conversely, betrays a growing detachment from literary debate. His *désengagement* mirrors, for these commentators, the complacency of a bourgeoisie reluctant to confront cultural stimuli which challenge the ideological assumptions of the *Risorgimento*. They, nonetheless, share the Croceian view that Capuana's continued advocacy of the concrete and of the socio-historically precise safeguards a broad realist tradition.[9]

Most subsequent Marxist critics have, however, plotted a steady 'involuzione' from the pro-naturalist *Studi sulla letterature contemporanea* to a neo-idealist position. In their reading, the positivist ideology underpinning Capuana's critical theory is gradually undermined. As he pares his poetics down to the principle of impersonality, Capuana abandons the naturalist concept of literature as scientific investigation into contemporary reality. In Capuana's later essays, the novel is neither human document nor case-study but a spontaneously generated autonomous organism. Carlo A. Madrignani develops furthest this interpretation of Capuana's criticism and first extends the 'involutional' thesis to his narrative in *Capuana e il naturalismo* (1970), the most substantial and influential study of the writer.

For Madrignani, Capuana's most innovative writings are the psychological studies of bourgeois subjects collected in *Le appassionate* (1893). In these short stories, written mostly in the 1880s, Madrignani detects a 'laico fatalismo',[10] where physiological factors persistently thwart will, reason, and spiritual aspiration, and where psyche and nervous system are one. In the boldest, Capuana altogether abandons positivist optimism to portray man as constitutionally prey to the irrational. In Capuana's first novels, however, Madrignani argues that materialist psychology is undermined by a vestigial idealism. In *Giacinta*, the heroine's isolation reveals Capuana's failure to plot a

link between milieu and individual psychology. Unable to probe a society whose values he fully shares, he portrays a static reality and negates the positivist ambition to transform actuality. For Madrignani, the heroine remains a pathological case. In *Profumo*, conversely, he argues that potentially subversive insights into the sexual substratum of the mother-son relationship are neutralized by a reassuring backdrop of normality, into which the protagonists are ultimately absorbed.

In Madrignani's analysis, the idealist elements always present in Capuana's thought increasingly take precedence in his post-1890 narrative. They evolve towards decadentism in *La sfinge*, towards neo-Catholicism in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* and towards neo-Hegelianism in *Rassegnazione*. Abandoning the psychological materialism which underpins his best work, he outlives his historical 'function'. For Madrignani, the later Capuana seeks to detach positivist method from positivist ideology. In his attempt to merge impersonality and idealist content, Capuana fails to perceive that *verista* poetics posits the knowability of external reality and the capacity of language objectively to record psychological data. His 'compattezza di pensiero e di gusto' is fatally compromised.[11]

Madrignani, then, comprehensively overturns early Croceian perspectives. He equally dismisses the preference of later Croceian critics for Capuana's Sicilian sketches or *paesane*. For Madrignani, these reflect the amused detachment of a 'continentalized' author. Evoking colourful grotesques for a mainland audience, Capuana reveals a profound 'insensibilità sociale'.[12]

Madrignani's approach informs most recent discussion of Capuana, which has focused upon a 'naturalist' canon of work stretching from *Giacinta* to *Profumo*.[13] Commentators have generally accepted Madrignani's contention that the criticism and narrative of the 1890s displays a disorientated *possibilismo*. There have, nonetheless, been attempts to reappraise Capuana's post-1900 *shorter* fiction.[14] For Enrico Ghidetti (1973), in

collections such as *Delitto ideale* (1902) and *Coscienze* (1905), Capuana abandons the rigid schemes of positivist psychology to portray a reality fragmented into isolated consciousnesses. His characters are tormented by the incommunicability of subjective experience, the promptings of the subconscious, and the omnipotence of chance. Capuana thus closely pre-empts the work of Pirandello.[15] Ghidetti detects no concession to decadentism or to neo-Catholicism. In their cognitive confusion, Capuana's protagonists debunk the pretensions of D'Annunzio's superman and Fogazzaro's saint. In the recent volume *Novelliere impenitente* (1985), Francesca Ferrara, Claudia Vannocci, and Manuela Failli further explore Ghidetti's suggestions. For these critics, Capuana's later *novelle* are characterized by a blurring of distinctions between real and ideal, and a proliferation of narrative layers which reveals an embryonic relativism.[16]

To date, however, little effort has been made to integrate Capuana's later novels into a revised assessment of his post-1900 production. Indeed only Judith Davies (1979) seriously challenges Madrignani's reading of the novels following *Profumo*.[17] She argues that he understates idealist elements in Capuana's work of the 1870s and 1880s. For Davies, a fatalistic Hegelian faith in human progress prevents Capuana from seeing in positivism an authentic instrument for change. The crisis of positivism leads Capuana to accentuate the idealist component of his thought. He does not, however, as Madrignani claims, reinstate ethical and religious values but explores the subjective experience of the individual consciousness. Idealism is nonetheless counterbalanced and, in Capuana's best work, outweighed by a positivistic rationalism. *La sfinge* and *Rassegnazione* are not, in Davies's view, gratuitous concessions to a changing climate of taste but offer a parodistic treatment of decadent themes. Davies rejects, in particular, a reading of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* as a spiritual drama of redemption which offers involuntary insights into post-*Risorgimento* Sicily. In what, for her, is Capuana's most engaged work, quintessentially naturalist techniques are employed to present a penetrating critique of feudal ideology.

* * * *

In this study, I shall argue that elements recently judged characteristic of Capuana's later fiction are, in fact, constants in his work. We shall find that, from the beginning of his career as a novelist, Capuana calls into question the dichotomy of subject and object, employs parody to combat ascendant ideologies, and reflects lucidly upon the crisis of the Unitary state. I shall contend that even Davies undervalues the idealist component of Capuana's thought. Both Davies and Madrignani rightly detect, in Capuana's pre-1890 criticism and narrative, a compound of Hegelian and positivist elements.[18] It is not, however, a quietist faith in the odyssey of mind which primarily conditions Capuana's reception of positivism. It is, rather, an epistemology which stresses the liberation through self-knowledge of the individual consciousness. Capuana repeatedly portrays the divided self and unhappy consciousness. His novels explore the possibility of reintegrating mind and body, spirit and nature. On the one hand, they denounce all forms of idealism which set man against matter. On the other, they argue that positivism too runs the risk of splintering the personality, whether by detaching an observing self from objectively knowable reality, by fostering a debilitating spirit of analysis, or by proposing an exclusively materialist view of the psyche. In discussing the fusion of Hegelianism and positivism, critics have, moreover, overlooked Hegelian elements in the positivist thinkers that most influence Capuana.[19] From Taine, for example, Capuana takes not the trinity of race, milieu, and moment but the prospect of a pantheistic reunion with nature. He similarly shares Renan's faith that a synthetic age will supersede the present age of analysis. Like De Sanctis, then, Capuana sees in positivism the potential to rehabilitate the natural and to reinvigorate a culture sapped by abstract ideals .

For Madrignani and many recent critics, Capuana largely fails to perceive the tension between positivist and idealist elements in his work. This study will show that, on the contrary, he presents a lucid critique of conflicting ideologies. We shall find that his novels have a dialectical structure where the protagonist is urged

to reconcile contending forces. Capuana surrounds his protagonist with ideological doubles representing thesis, antithesis, or possible models of synthesis. As we discover that Capuana's novels do not passively reflect ideological crisis but constitute a coherent critical discourse, we shall be led, in particular, to reassess four aspects of his work.

Firstly, we shall challenge the assertion that Capuana isolates his protagonists against a superficially observed backdrop. We shall see that milieu demands to be read in an allegorical key. Capuana does not present ethnological data or local colour but elements of a dialectic. Milieu functions as the embodiment of contending ideologies or as an instructive image of synthesis.

Secondly, we shall note that Capuana's protagonists habitually *seek* isolation. In idyllic retreat, however, they discover that milieu is internalized. This will permit us to question the perception that, in Capuana's psychology, the physiological outweighs the environmental. For critics who follow Madrignani, most notably Lorenza Lorenzi (1985),[20] Capuana's 'naturalist' production pessimistically portrays the insoluble conflict of nature and culture. His protagonists, in this analysis, are constitutionally prey to irrational and instinctive forces which expose the precarious foundations of bourgeois institutions. I shall argue, conversely, that the genuine conflict is between nature and *second nature*. In Capuana, ideology is written in the body. Sexually repressive idealism determines physiological reactions; contempt for the flesh becomes flesh. In this struggle, authentic, unconditioned instinct is unequivocally healthy.

Thirdly, we shall re-examine the relationship between the sexes in Capuana. For many post-Madrignani critics, particularly Angelo Piero Cappello (1994),[21] Capuana specializes in psychological studies of the constitutionally neurotic female. In these he adopts the viewpoint of a positivist male who never altogether loses confidence in the greater rationality of his sex. For some commentators,[22] the conviction that woman is peculiarly prey to nerve and instinct eventually leads Capuana to embrace a

decadent sexual ideology. In their analysis, *La sfinge* and *Rassegnazione* portray woman as the pernicious embodiment of nature. We shall see, however, that Capuana consistently exposes the dangers of both positivist and decadent views of womanhood. Each posits an unhealthy dualism which locates the natural outwith masculine rationality. Each exacerbates the unhappy consciousness which projects its fear of nature onto woman. Capuana's male protagonists are forced to confront their 'feminine' vulnerability to the irrational and instinctive, and are urged to reconcile mind and matter. His heroines are not instruments of the will to life but victims of repressive sexual iconographies.

Finally, we shall recognize that Capuana's critique of ideology reveals an unacknowledged social and historical consciousness. The crisis of the Unitary state is traced to the conflict between positivism and idealism (both religious and secular). The quest for synthesis is not a function of Capuana's philosophical dilettantism but an urgent response to political reality. Where earlier commentators have perceived a retreat from history, we shall detect an engaged critical spirit.

As we examine these four areas of Capuana's work, we shall find that his intellectual itinerary cannot be represented as an unambiguous drift towards idealism. In the five chapters of this study, we shall plot the evolution of Capuana's thought from *Giacinta* to *Rassegnazione*. In Chapter 1, we shall challenge the critical consensus that in *Giacinta* Capuana attempts to import naturalist psychology but is thwarted by a latent and only dimly perceived idealism. We shall discover, conversely, a cautious exploration of naturalist categories from a Hegelian perspective, in which the impact of race, milieu, and moment is set against a belief in liberation through self-consciousness. We shall see that, in particular, hereditary factors are systematically downplayed. At this stage, however, Capuana does not convincingly dramatize conflict between free consciousness and conditioning. An externally focalized narrative alternates between dispassionate analysis of societally determined neurosis and a more

sympathetic record of Giacinta's emotional and intellectual awakening. Capuana ultimately fails to persuade us that Giacinta is capable of comprehending and overcoming formative influences. His Hegelian critique of positivism is more cogently embodied in Giacinta's physician Follini. For many recent critics, Follini errs in abandoning positivist objectivity. We shall see, however, that this is a prerequisite for authentic knowledge. Follini glimpses that the distinction between observing self and external reality is false. To know, he apprehends, is to desire, and to bring about change. He fails solely in not acting upon this perception.

In Chapter 2, we shall recognize Capuana's most ambitious attempt to reconcile warring ideologies. The use of internal focalization in *Profumo* simultaneously satisfies positivist demands for impersonality and permits Capuana to portray from within the liberation of a consciousness. Where in *Giacinta*, an external narrator juggles idealist and positivist perspectives, here they are embodied in milieu. Where, before, Capuana provided the narrator with a double (Follini), in *Profumo* he surrounds the protagonists with ideological doubles who personify the extremes of materialism and religious idealism or represent potential syntheses. The protagonists' choices are fully dramatized. They are led to recognize that ascetic Catholicism and positivist psychology combine to exile the instinctive and sexual and thus to fragment the consciousness. *Profumo*, we shall find, is not an isolated psychosexual case-study set against a reassuring backdrop. Eugenia's 'neurosis' is a psychosomatic protest against sexually repressive ideologies. The allegorical village of Marzallo offers not comic relief but an instructive reconciliation with nature. The resolution of marital crisis is not an optimistic exaltation of the will but the purging of both positivist and idealist sexual stereotypes. We shall note too an unacknowledged political subtext. Patrizio, a tax-collector, is the representative of the positivist Unitary state. His employers, however, proves as repressive of an organic society as their clerical predecessors.

In Chapter 3, we shall see that *La sfinge*, a hitherto neglected novel, proves a vital gauge of Capuana's reaction to political and ideological crisis. Far from offering concessions to neo-idealism, it charts growing doubts as to the freedom of the consciousness to overcome ideology. Again, Capuana portrays a conflict of positivism and idealism. Again, woman is stigmatized by both as the instrument of nature. This time, however, positivism is set not against Hegelianism or ascetic Catholicism but decadentism. Tossed between ideological extremes, the protagonist perceives no possibility of synthesis, whether in reconciliation with nature or by locating the ideal within the real. His lover, too, sees no option but to marry the fragmented protagonist or the discredited positivist Butironi. The widow of a speculator and mother of sickly child, she is a transparent cipher for a nation ideologically bereaved by the crisis of the post-*Risorgimento* state. Where, in *Profumo*, the possibility of synthesis is imaged, as internal focalization alternates between Eugenia and Patrizio, here we are stranded within the male protagonist's divided self.

In Chapter 4, we shall argue that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is neither a tardy fruit of naturalism nor a neo-Catholic parable of redemption. Again, we shall discover a protagonist struggling to overcome an atavistic and anti-natural ideology. The master-slave relationship which the *marchese* enjoys with his feudal subjects and peasant mistress is mirrored in his dualistic concept of the psyche. Mind stigmatizes matter as the slavish other. The murder of a serf, however, deprives the *marchese* of the other on which his self-consciousness depends. As crudely materialistic positivism and a Nietzschean exhalation of the will prove equally incapable of restoring his identity, he is gradually forced to confront his divided self and to seek synthesis. This he finally achieves by confessing to crimes provoked by feudal abuses and acknowledging his own bond with nature in the form of his mistress Agrippina. His tale is less the awakening of a conscience than the freeing of a consciousness.

The *marchese*'s quest has, we shall see, an unacknowledged political dimension. The reintegration of mind and matter

presages inter-class co-operation. Alone among the feudal nobility, the *marchese* perceives his ties to the land and people and glimpses the possibilities of enlightened paternalism. Both psychological and political synthesis, however, are achieved *in extremis*. The acquisition of self-consciousness signals the end of the aristocracy. The *marchese*'s perceptions are ripe to be exploited by his bourgeois successors. Where *Profumo*, then, posits a readily attainable synthesis and *La sfinge* queries the possibility of reconciling contending forces, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* places full synthesis in the future.

Milieu and secondary character in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* are evoked with greater socio-historical precision than in Capuana's previous novels. We shall see, however, that they equally support an allegorical reading. The conflict between ideological conditioning and the free consciousness is reflected in contending mythical and religious subtexts. Allusions to classical antiquity suggest that the protagonist is fated to re-enact atavistic crimes. Elements of popular hagiography and echoes of the *Orlando furioso*, of Goethe's *Faust*, and of Flaubert's *La Tentation de saint Antoine* imply, conversely, that he is chosen to redeem his stock.

*La sfinge* and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* propose a critique of decadent sexual iconography and of *superomismo* respectively. *Rassegnazione*, nonetheless, represents Capuana's most rigorous confrontation with decadentism and, in particular, the thought and work of D'Annunzio. In Chapter 5, we shall see that erosive positivist self-analysis combines with exacerbated idealism to paralyse its protagonist's will. Dario embraces *superomismo* as a means of escaping abulia. D'Annunzio's Nietzscheanism, however, is exposed as a strategy to conceal abulia from the sufferer. By exalting the will in spheres where it must remain impotent, Dario flatters his self-image as martyr to the ideal. We shall find, therefore, that *Rassegnazione* cannot be read as a *Bildungsroman*, where ideals are shed in favour of an authorially endorsed resignation. Its protagonist achieves neither self-understanding nor a stable synthesis of real and ideal.

In *Rassegnazione*, Capuana presents, rather, an examination of the concept of resignation. Dario is flanked by ideological doubles, both writers. The significantly named Bissi argues that the creative will is thwarted in the material world and can achieve freedom in art alone. The DeSanctisian Lostini, conversely, urges acceptance of human limitations and demands that the ideal be located within the real. Dario rejects both definitions of resignation, opting, in the end, for a life-denying renunciation. Before reaching this conclusion, however, Dario may come closer to realizing his ideal than he appreciates. His final, most modest attempt to create art in life cannot be judged an unequivocal failure. In his last novel, Capuana ultimately suspends judgment between the rival ideologies represented by Dario, Bissi, and Lostini.

The Capuana that will emerge from our study will not be the ideological weather-vane posited by recent commentators. We shall not detect in the early novels conflict between neophytic positivism and a stubborn, latent idealism. Nor shall we find in their successors a passive reflection of the crisis of positivism. Throughout Capuana's career as a novelist, conversely, we shall plot an engaged critique of the evolving ideologies of positivism and idealism. Rather than a growing indifference to the historical moment, we shall find a quest for synthesis in response to lucidly perceived cultural and political stimuli.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Emanuella Scarano, Introduction to Emanuella Scarano and others, *Novelliere impenitente: studi su Luigi Capuana* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1985), pp. 9-28 (p. 10).

[2] I follow critical precedent by considering novels only those texts which Capuana explicitly terms *romanzi*. I omit from this study lengthy narratives such as 'Il benefattore' which Capuana lists among his *novelle*, and *racconti* for children such as *Scurpiddu*, *Gambalesta*, *Cardello*, and *Gli "americani" di Ràbbato*. It has been

argued that the 'romanzo fiabesco' *Re Bracalone* might be classified amongst Capuana's work for adults (S. Eugene Scalia, *Luigi Capuana and his Times* (New York: Vanni, 1952), pp. 238-41). However, although Scalia is surely right to suggest that its political allegory must have proved beyond the understanding of a younger audience, there can be little doubt that the book is addressed primarily to the juvenile reader.

[3] The most important early twentieth-century studies written from a Croceian perspective are: Benedetto Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', in Benedetto Croce, *La letteratura della nuova Italia: saggi critici*, 6 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1914-40), III (1915), 101-18 (first publ. in *La critica*, 3 (1905)), Achille Pellizzari, *Il pensiero e l'arte di Luigi Capuana* (Naples: Francesco Perrella, 1919), Pietro Vetro, *Luigi Capuana: la vita e le opere* (Catania: Studio Editoriale Moderno, 1922), and Luigi Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', *Nuova antologia*, 259 (1928), 5-18.

[4] Lucio D'Ambra first champions Capuana's sketches of Sicilian life in Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Le più belle novelle*, selected and introd. by Lucio D'Ambra (Palermo: Sandron, 1939), pp. I-XXXIX (p. XXI). He is followed, in particular, by Ettore Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', in *Letteratura italiana: i minori*, 4 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1961-62), IV (1962), 2897-2927 (pp. 2912-14), Giuseppe Marchese, *Capuana poeta della vita* (Palermo: Andò, 1964), pp. 60-69, and Edoardo Villa, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Le paesane*, ed. by Edoardo Villa (Milan: Marzorati, 1974), pp. 5-109 (pp. 29-35).

[5] *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is most forcefully proposed as Capuana's finest novel in Caccia, pp. 2908-09, Marchese, pp. 110-34, and V. P. Traversa, *Luigi Capuana Critic and Novelist* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 101-20.

[6] Among the first Croceians, Croce's own comments on Capuana's critical writing are most fully developed in Luigi Tonelli, *La critica letteraria italiana negli ultimi cinquant'anni* (Bari: Laterza, 1914), pp. 448-53. Not all early twentieth-century commentators receive Capuana's criticism so positively. For Luigi Russo, Capuana remains an intransigent ideologue prescribing infallible Zolian formulae (Luigi Russo, 'Luigi Capuana', in Luigi Russo, *I narratori* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987), pp. 67-68). For Aldo Vallone, conversely, Capuana slavishly follows each passing critical fashion (Aldo Vallone, *Il romanzo dalla Scapigliatura alla Ronda* (Genoa: Casa Editrice degli Orfani, 1941), pp. 88-92). Vallone's view is

more recently echoed by Gino Raya for whom Capuana is a 'dilettante d'innovazione' (Gino Raya, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Ciranna, 1969), p. 246).

[7] If the studies by Caccia, Marchese, and Traversa present an essentially Croceian view of Capuana's narrative, the following articles largely reflect Croce's assessment of Capuana's criticism: Ermanno Scuderi, 'Capuana critico', *Letterature moderne*, 1 (1962), 47-55 (repr. as Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Scritti critici*, ed. and introd. by Ermanno Scuderi (Catania: Giannotta, 1972), pp. 9-21), Palmiro M. Pinagli, 'La critica di Luigi Capuana', *Rivista di studi crociani*, 4 (1967), 308-24, 409-26, Carmelo Musumarra, 'Capuana critico', *Cultura e scuola*, no. 21 (January-March 1967), 73-80, and Aurelio Navarria, 'Le "formole metafisiche" di Luigi Capuana', *Letteratura*, no. 91-92 (1968), 68-74.

[8] See Gaetano Trombatore, 'La critica di Luigi Capuana e la poetica del verismo', in Gaetano Trombatore, *Riflessi letterari del Risorgimento in Sicilia* (Palermo: Manfredi, 1967), pp. 75-106 (which reworks the articles 'Luigi Capuana critico', *Belfagor*, 4 (1949), and 'Capuana e il verismo', *Arena*, January-March 1954). Trombatore's lead is followed in Mario Pomilio, *Dal naturalismo al verismo* (Naples: Liguori, 1966), pp. 122-156, and Roberto Bigazzi, *I colori del vero: vent'anni di narrativa, 1860-1880* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1969), pp. 322-60.

[9] Trombatore and Bigazzi nonetheless differ from Croceian critics by insisting that the principle of impersonality remains central to Capuana's later critical thought. For Bigazzi, Capuana's continued faith in impersonality mirrors 'una fiducia completa nel reale e nel valore della sua testimonianza spontanea' (Bigazzi, *I colori del vero*, p. 357).

[10] Carlo A. Madrignani, *Capuana e il naturalismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), p. 246. In his approach to Capuana's criticism, Madrignani is pre-empted by Giulio Marzot in his *Battaglie veristiche dell'Ottocento* (Messina: Principato, 1941), pp. 283-84, and Renato Bertacchini in *Documenti e prefazioni del romanzo dell'Ottocento*, ed. by Renato Bertacchini (Rome: Studium, 1969), p. 254.

[11] Madrignani, p. 247.

[12] Ibid., p. 151.

[13] See, in particular, Anna Storti Abate, *Introduzione a Capuana* (Bari: Laterza, 1989), Angelo Piero Cappello, *Invito alla lettura di Capuana* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), and the majority of contributions to *Capuana verista: atti dell'incontro di studio, Catania, 29-30 ottobre 1982* (Catania: Biblioteca della Fondazione Verga, 1984). Madrignani's analysis of Capuana's criticism is reflected most closely in Giorgio Luti, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, ed by Giorgio Luti (Milan: Fabbri, 1973), pp. VII-XXVIII, and in Maria Luisa Patruno, 'Arte e scienza nella teoria letteraria di Luigi Capuana', in Maria Luisa Patruno, *Teorie e forme della letteratura verista: Capuana, Verga, Betteloni* (Manduria: Lacaita, 1985), pp. 29-76 (first publ. in *Lavoro critico*, 17/18 (1980)).

[14] Some attempts, however, have been made to defend Capuana's later criticism. Mario Pomilio (Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Verga e D'Annunzio*, ed. by Mario Pomilio (Bologna: Cappelli, 1972), pp. 5-50) shares Madrignani's view that Capuana sacrifices 'l'essenza del gusto veristico' (ibid., p. 42) and undermines 'l'incidenza storica delle proprie posizioni' (ibid., p. 43) but follows Croce in asserting that what he loses in historical validity he gains 'in sede di concezione generale' (ibid., p. 44). Stefano Longo ('Rassegna di studi su Luigi Capuana critico', *Critica letteraria*, 4 (1976), 543-66, and 'Capuana tra positivismo e idealismo', *Critica letteraria*, 6 (1978), 101-29) argues that Capuana's engagement with the new 'isms', far from denoting crisis, is demanded by his role as 'critico militante'. His criticism is reactive rather than systematic. In the thick of journalistic debate, contradictions are inevitable. For Longo, Capuana is nonetheless to be praised for his tireless defence of robust realism. Conversely, Antonio Palermo suggests that Capuana may forge a coherent post-*verista* aesthetic. Influenced by Pirandello and the young Croce, he employs the concept of 'sincerità' as a 'nuova categoria critica portante' (Antonio Palermo, 'Per una rivalutazione dell'ultimo Capuana', *L'illusione della realtà: studi su Luigi Capuana. Atti del convegno di Montreal, 16-18 marzo 1989*, ed. by Michelangelo Piccone and Enrica Rossetti (Rome: Salerno, 1990), pp. 297-316 (p. 307)).

[15] See Enrico Ghidetti, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti, 3 vols (Rome: Salerno, 1973-74), I (1973), IX-LVI (repr. as 'Il demonio della novella', in Enrico Ghidetti, *L'ipotesi del realismo: Capuana, Verga, Valera e altri* (Padua, Liviana, 1982), pp. 75-123). Ghidetti may, in fact, have been stimulated by Pirandello's own writings on Capuana. In the

reviews gathered in Paolo Maria Sipala, *Capuana e Pirandello: storia e testi di una relazione letteraria* (Catania: Bonanno, 1974), Pirandello repeatedly stresses that Capuana displays a non-naturalist indifference to external data and privileges an experiencing subject. Ghidetti's remarks are also partly pre-empted by Mario Zangara, for whom the protagonists of Capuana's later short fiction 'preannunziano sulla molteplicità dell'io e sulle metamorfosi somatiche e psicologiche la meditazione pirandelliana' (Mario Zangara, *Luigi Capuana* (Catania: La Navicella, 1964), p. 111), and by Enrico Villa who stresses Capuana's cautious exploration of the subconscious (Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 49). If Ghidetti challenges Madrignani's view of Capuana's later fiction, he largely shares his assessment of the pre-1890 narrative, of the *paesane*, and of the critical writings.

[16] Francesca Ferrara, 'Ideale *vs* reale', Claudia Vannocci, 'La casistica della coscienza', Manuela Failli, 'La voluttà di creare', in Scarano and others, *Novelliere impenitente*, pp. 61-86, 87-125, 126-68.

[17] See Judith Davies, *The Realism of Luigi Capuana: Theory and Practice in the Development of Late Nineteenth-Century Italian Narrative* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979). Like Ghidetti, Davies nonetheless offers a reading of the Capuana's criticism and pre-1890 narrative which owes much to Madrignani.

[18] Capuana's introduction to Hegelian thought via the writings of De Sanctis and of Angelo Camillo De Meis is well analysed in Davies, pp. 22-33, and in Madrignani, pp. 64-68.

[19] Critics have largely failed to acknowledge that Capuana is by no means alone in fusing positivist and Hegelian elements. As D. G. Charlton remarks, it was a commonplace in 1860s France to equate Hegelianism with the perceived materialism of the contemporary positivists (D. G. Charlton, *Positivist Thought in France during the Second Empire 1852-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 155). Where, for Madrignani, Taine is unequivocally a positivist, historians of the movement, such as W. M. Simon, see little positivist influence on his thought (W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 128-30).

[20] Lorenza Lorenzi, 'La casistica della passione', in Scarano and others, *Novelliere impenitente*, pp. 29-60.

[21] Cappello speaks of Capuana's 'concezione borghese della "superiorità" dell'uomo tutto forza e ragione e della subalternità della donna tutta sensibilità e istinto' (Cappello, p. 138). His fiction presents 'lo stereotipo della femmina vista dalla scienza e dalla cultura dell'Ottocento' (ibid., p. 137).

[22] Notably Giorgio Pullini, '*Rassegnazione* fra inetti e superuomini', in Giorgio Pullini, *Tra esistenza e coscienza: narrativa e teatro del '900* (Milan: Mursia, 1986), pp. 113-37 (first publ. as 'Fra "inetti" e "superuomini": *Rassegnazione*', in *Miscellanea di studi in onore di V. Branca*, 5 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1983), V, 137-57).

# CHAPTER I

## *Giacinta*: A Critique of Positivism

### 1. *Critical Approaches to 'Giacinta'*

Capuana's first novel *Giacinta* is published in 1879. Although substantially revised editions appear in 1886 and 1889, critical attention has focused on the original text.[1] The 1879 *Giacinta* has been widely recognized as the first Italian novel which maturely engages with naturalist poetics. It was thus long censured by Croceian critics for its attempt to accommodate the non-poetic element of positivist science.[2] For these, the doctrine of impersonality and the resolution of character in terms of race, moment, and milieu seriously impair creative liberty. Only in the last three decades has a group of critics sympathetic to naturalism reappraised the novel, applauding a bold analysis of the hereditary and physiological determinants of the heroine's actions.[3] They nonetheless argue that Capuana falls short of his naturalist model by failing convincingly to link Giacinta's behaviour to a wider social context. In their analysis, Capuana is incapable of achieving a critical perspective upon a society whose values he shares. As a result, the protagonist appears, alternately, a pathological case, of interest to science but posing little threat to the bourgeois reader, and the traditional heroine of melodrama. Naturally, such ideological incoherence has formal implications. For recent commentators, Capuana hesitates between two contrasting concepts of impersonality: on the one hand, the detached observation of events in their irreversible logic, on the other, the strict observance of a fixed internal perspective. Neither is rigorously observed. In the first instance, the narrator too often reveals himself as moralist or analyst and, in the second, as sentimental confidant of his heroine.

In analysing the novel's formal failings, these critics take their lead from Capuana himself. In his preface to the 1889 edition, the novelist looks back on the composition of the first *Giacinta*. He

evokes his belated discovery of the French realist and naturalist tradition, recalling that he had scarcely emerged from the 'farraginosa lettura' of Balzac before plunging into *Madame Bovary* and the first *Rougon-Macquart*.[4] These narrative models, he regrets, 'non erano arrivati a fondersi così bene nella mia mente, da darmi il chiaro concetto della misura con cui si potrebbe ottenere anche in Italia il resultato [*sic*] d'una narrazione originale'. Consequently, working on *Giacinta*, 'la forma stessa del racconto procedeva incerta, tra quella del Balzac dove l'autore interviene e giudica e riflette e l'altra, che più mi seduceva, dove l'autore si sforza di nascondersi, lasciando piena libertà all'azione e ai caratteri dei personaggi'.[5] From time to time, Capuana glimpsed his error but, he confesses, 'non sapevo correggerlo'.

In my study of *Giacinta*, I shall suggest that this preface provides a potentially misleading *clef de lecture*. Through a brief examination of Capuana's critical writings of the 1860s and 1870s, I shall question how far the débutant novelist genuinely perceives a conflict between the two narrative methods -- the discursive and the impersonal -- which he retrospectively portrays as equal temptations. I shall ask whether Capuana authentically feels that devices which he later dismisses as interventionist, judgmental, or didactic, are altogether incompatible with an impersonal stance. I shall query his awareness, at this early stage of the evolution of *verismo*, of the possibilities of internal focalization.

Certainly, Capuana rapidly becomes dissatisfied with the narrative form of the first *Giacinta* and begins revising the text, with a view to minimizing his authorial presence, only months after publication. One should note, nonetheless, that in January 1879, shortly before completing the first edition, he claims to have written 'un lavoro meramente oggettivo' where 'l'io dell'autore non si scorge affatto' and 'i personaggi si muovono liberissimi'.[6] We may detect bravado in these words but should hesitate before judging them less reliable than the 1889 preface, in which Capuana makes grotesquely inflated claims for the pioneering status of the first *Giacinta* ('coloro che entrano oggi nel

campo dell'arte ignorano il tormentosissimo stato di chi dovette provarsi il primo, senza tradizioni, quasi senza guida' (p. 33)). Seeking retrospectively to establish himself as a precocious theorist of *verismo*, Capuana directs us to approach *Giacinta* as an imperfect anticipation of Verga's internally focalized narrative. Our reading of the novel, conversely, will reveal an altogether more cautious and coherent exploration of naturalist poetics and ideology. A reappraisal of the formal innovations of the first *Giacinta* will lead us to see that its psychological models posit a more dynamic rapport between protagonist and milieu than recent critics have allowed. This, however, is predicated on an idealist rather than naturalist concept of consciousness.

## 2. *The Concept of Impersonality in Capuana's Early Criticism 1866-79*

A short survey of the development of the concept of impersonality in Capuana's early critical writings will suggest why he may briefly have considered *Giacinta* rigorously objective. Critics have traced Capuana's elaboration of impersonality to differing stages of his career. For most Croceian commentators, the concept is essentially borrowed from Zola, whose narrative and criticism Capuana first encounters in 1877-79. For recent critics, however, if Capuana glimpses the potential of impersonal narrative upon reading Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1877), he only makes impersonality the linchpin of his poetics when he subsequently seeks to forge an ideologically neutral naturalism. They argue that Capuana's narrative theory develops in opposition to the engaged socialism of Zola's *Le Roman expérimental* (1880) and in response to Verga's exploration of internal focalization in *La vita dei campi* (1879) and *I Malavoglia* (1881). Yet this analysis plays down passages in Capuana's critical writings of the 1860s which pre-empt his mature definition of impersonality.[7] We shall see that the narrative techniques of the 1879 *Giacinta* largely derive from a pre-naturalist critical debate.

Capuana's first reviews of verse and drama for *La nazione* (1866-68) reveal that unwarranted authorial intrusions are already the young critic's bugbear. In a piece dated 20 May 1867, he laments that the dramatist Friedrich Halm 'non è riuscito a tenersi in disparte innanzi il suo tema, e il pensatore moderno, il filosofo che vuol dimostrare un'idea con un tal quale sillogismo artistico è sempre sotto gli occhi dello spettatore che lo vede attraverso i suoi personaggi'.[8] Halm, he adds, 'non si trasfonde abbastanza nei suoi personaggi fino a celarsi allo sguardo degli spettatori'. He boldly censures two contemporary critical idols in similar terms. In November 1866, he argues that Paolo Ferrari lacks the ear for dialogue which permits an author to vanish behind his characters.[9] Two years later, he regrets that the hero of Prati's *Armando* (1868) becomes 'cosí trasparente da farci scorgere sotto la falsa veste la persona del poeta'.[10] Great artists, conversely, fuse idea and action so completely as to create an indivisible whole. Among Capuana's contemporaries, only Achille Torelli appreciates this, creating characters so truthful 'che tu sperimenti subito il piú grande effetto dell'arte, quello di dimenticare perfettamente l'artista'.[11]

However, if Capuana demands more stringently than most the retreat of the dramatist from the stage, his stance is far from isolated. One readily detects the influence of De Sanctis. Capuana proves receptive to his insistence that form is inherent in content and to his demand that the ideal be retempered with the real. Yet even observers largely hostile to realist trends, like Paolo Lioy, proscribe the 'moralità forzata' and abstain from siding with the 'virtuosi'.[12] Carlo Cattaneo, meanwhile, remarks approvingly of a contemporary Italian novel that 'l'autore non fa mai capolino nel libro; vi è come passivo; nessuno potrebbe appuntargli che siasi formato un piano o prefisso uno scopo al quale mostri di convergere i suoi sforzi'.[13] Indeed, a critical consensus emerges in the 1860s that, while the end of literature remains reformist, a work's message must emerge spontaneously from within its very organism. One must stress that the young Capuana has no quarrel with the engaged nature of contemporary theatre. Far from advocating ideological neutrality, he poses as defender of family

values. He nonetheless subscribes to a widely held view that a civil art need not imply weighty authorial intervention. In this, he reflects post-*Risorgimento* confidence that the ideal is latent in the real.

While writing for *La nazione*, Capuana shares the contemporary conviction that theatre can forge national consciousness and must therefore be the quintessential art-form of the New Italy. By 1872, however, when he compiles his theatrical reviews in *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*, Capuana considers it an exhausted genre. Exposure to Hegelian aesthetics convinces him that the march of Mind has rendered theatre obsolete. The presence of 'il pensatore moderno' on the contemporary stage presages the death of the genre and, ultimately, of all art.[14] The work of Dumas *fils* and Augier represents the extreme synthesis of form and reflection before art dissolves into pure thought. Their characters possess the bare minimum of autonomous life. Capuana now considers the impersonal art of the ancients beyond the modern dramatist's reach. The sole art form capable of accommodating the incorrigibly analytical bent of the modern mind is the novel. An intrinsically impure genre, it is the last resort of an enfeebled collective imagination. What must be stressed, therefore, is that Capuana now judges the novel uniquely attuned to his times precisely because it permits the writer to intervene *qua* thinker. It is the conviction that the reflective artist can no longer conceal his presence that first leads Capuana to the novel. As he elaborates his narrative theory, he will strive to reconcile the analytical character of the novel with his earlier demand that protagonists attain autonomous life.

There are few clues to the development of Capuana's critical thought in the five years between *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo* and his first reviews for *Il corriere della sera* in 1877. Recent commentators, such as Madrignani, have posited a smooth transition from an admiration for the drama and narrative of Dumas *fils* to a passion for the rigorously scientific approach of Zola. Formally, this would imply a transition from narrator as guide, as urbane family doctor, to narrator as invisible

orchestrator. There is a danger, once again, however, of positing the isolated avant-garde figure that Capuana is himself retrospectively keen to evoke, and of overlooking evidence of a wide-ranging debate on the formal implications of a demand for objectivity.

One must not, in particular, neglect the formal example of a moderate realist strand, inspired by English models such as Dickens, Brontë, and, later, Eliot, and associated with the journals *Rivista minima* and *Rassegna settimanale*. The writers grouped around the former hold views close to those of the Capuana of *La nazione*. Theirs is an engaged reformist art which targets individual mores in lieu of the body politic but which eschews pedagogic authorial intrusion. Typical is Salvatore Farina, a close friend of Capuana who shares none of his enthusiasm for transalpine narrative models. In his analysis, the surgical excesses of Dumas *fils* and the cynicism of Balzac merely perpetuate the hunger for profit and for social advancement which they ruthlessly expose. They should strive, rather, to strengthen simple domestic affections while minimizing direct authorial comment. For Farina, a novelist must appear to accept passively his characters' behaviour and imbue his work with an air of inner necessity.[15] The moral must be implicit in the tale, the ideal firmly located in the real. Viewed objectively, Farina implies, the contemporary is revealed as harmonious. There is no suggestion, however, that authorial self-effacement necessarily limits the descriptive or analytical functions of a narrator who, if impartial, need not disguise his presence.

For Pasquale Villari in the *Rassegna settimanale*, conversely, the claims of the French realist/naturalist tradition to objectivity are undermined by neither moral ambiguity nor proselytizing zeal but by its very externality. He laments a reluctance to diagnose motivation and a scorn for the spiritual. A rounded picture of the psyche, conversely, demands that characters be analysed in depth. Villari shows little awareness of the potential of internal focalization. A character may be granted full autonomy in dialogue but scenes must be rigorously prepared in advance.

Zola's school abuses the dramatic mode, neglecting quintessentially novelistic techniques of analysis.[16]

Yet the dramatic mode is championed in perhaps the most innovative contemporary discussion of novelistic form: Giorgio Arcoleo's *Letteratura contemporanea in Italia* (1875). Echoing *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*, Arcoleo accepts the 'spirito di analisi' as an integral component of modern art and deems the serenity of the ancients irretrievable. Pure drama no longer satisfies: we demand a glimpse behind the scenes. A fully-fledged passion grates: we yearn to follow its evolution. There is a private world which belongs exclusively to the novel and which 'per esser compreso, ha bisogno di analisi, di svolgimento, di osservazioni, di descrizioni'.[17] Unlike Capuana, Arcoleo believes that drama will ultimately re-emerge. Strikingly pre-empting the preface to Verga's 'L'amante di Gramigna', he foresees a time when critical powers will be so honed that spectators will immediately grasp a character's psychology. Meanwhile, the novel must maintain a dramatic quality. In almost Lubbockite terms, Arcoleo laments that in Italy 'si narra molto, si rappresenta poco'.[18] Its novelists create 'un popolo di creature, che hanno idee e parole grosse e corpi sottili, che si somigliano tutte, e tra cui avverti sempre l'autore, che fa capolino per dirti: "Lettor mio, io so, che non credi alle finzioni, scartiamole e ragioniamo tra noi!"'.[19] The description and analysis inseparable from the narrative form must be strictly dosed and subordinated to scenes in the dramatic mode which permit characters true autonomy.

Allowing for small differences of emphasis, the narrative model which emerges from the writings of Farina, Villari, and Arcoleo is strikingly uniform. It posits the alternation of preparatory analytical passages, in which a zero-focalizing but objective narrator eschews moral judgment, with dramatic scenes which permit characters a relative autonomy. This is the very model to which the first *Giacinta* essentially conforms. There is only sporadic experimentation with the internal focalization of *I Malavoglia* or *L'Assommoir*. We must treat with some scepticism Capuana's evocation of a solitary tussle with the conflicting

narrative strategies of Balzac and Zola. As we turn now to consider Capuana's reception of naturalism in his critical writings of the late 1870s, we must be careful not to underestimate the continuing influence of home-grown moderate realism, both in its formal lessons and in its cautious ambition to reform society via the individual.

The composition of the first *Giacinta* (1877-79) coincides with Capuana's return to critical activity as a reviewer for *Il corriere della sera*. Here, his largely neglected assessments of contemporary *Italian* writing prove altogether consonant with the cautious realism of the *Rivista minima* and *Rassegna settimanale*. Thus, while the poet Rapisardi and the dramatist De Renzis, exponents of moribund art-forms, loom large behind their lifeless mouthpieces, Capuana praises narrators such as Sacchetti and Gualdo for their analytical rigour. Gualdo, in particular, 'si compiace dell'analisi delicata, minuta, che ricostruisce, criticandolo, il vivo processo di una passione o di un sentimento'.[20] Like Villari, Capuana sees what he will later deem unacceptable narratorial intrusions as intrinsic to fiction. Echoing Arcoleo, he argues that, given 'questa bella impotenza del pensiero moderno a racchiudersi e circoscriversi nell'immagine', the novel alone permits the artist to ratiocinate.[21]

As recent commentators have acknowledged, however, Capuana's most significant critical encounter of these years is with Zola. We have seen that Capuana emerges from a critical tradition which proscribes conspicuous partiality but retains the orchestrating narrator. We have seen too that he first values the analytical potential of the novel through a Hegelian conviction that Mind is invading art rather than through a sense of the genre's compatibility with positivist study. How, then, does Capuana receive the formal lessons of French naturalism?

When discussing the review of *L'Assommoir* (March 1877) which initiates Capuana's discourse on Zola, critics have traditionally stressed those passages which irrefutably pre-empt the mature Verga. For Capuana, Zola is convinced that 'in un'opera

d'arte la forma sia tutto, e che quella sia la forma più appropriata al suo soggetto'.[22] He has thus studied 'cosí profondamente il suo soggetto, si è talmente connaturato coi pensieri, colle passioni, col linguaggio dei suoi operai, ch'anche quando parla per conto proprio continua ad usarne la parlata vivace'. Historians of *verismo* underline both the analysis of an internalized choral narrative and the attempt to downplay Zola's ideological commitment.

Critics, however, have not given due weight to the opening section of this essay, in which Capuana praises the descriptive set-pieces of Zola's earlier novels. He acknowledges that these occasionally draw attention to the narrator's virtuosity but insists that they generally produce an intense mimetic effect. So vividly evoked is the milieu of Les Halles in *Le Ventre de Paris*, for example, that 'si sprigionava dalle pagine del libro come dalla diretta realtà, e produceva l'effetto di farci sostar dalla lettura per annusarci le mani e per guardare se i vestiti non avessero preso una macchia d'unto'.[23] Capuana is thus surprised by the sobriety of *L'Assommoir*'s descriptive passages. He appears, nonetheless, to judge the adoption of an intradiegetic perspective as simply a complementary form of mimesis. Even in *L'Assommoir*, there are vignettes 'inappuntabili per verità e per colorito'.[24] The novel's extraordinary immediacy derives from the alternation of internal focalization and the scrupulous evocation of a physical milieu. It is unclear, moreover, whether Capuana deems *L'Assommoir* to be entirely free of magisterial psychological analysis. When Capuana praises Zola's 'analisi minuta, inesorabile, d'un'esattezza quasi scientifica', we remain unsure whether analysis is implicit or explicit, groundwork or *procès verbal*. There is enough here to suggest that, in 1877, Capuana is alive to the positive advantages of juxtaposing modes of focalization rather than torn between conflicting intra- and extradiegetic strategies. Equally significant is Capuana's emphasis on Zola's empathy for his characters. The assertion that, unlike Flaubert, Zola does not remain 'freddo o ironico o canzonatore [...] innanzi al soggetto del suo studio', but is 'tocco', 'commosso', boldly counters a received critical image of Zola as impassive anatomist.

It may surprise us then, turning to Capuana's review of *Une page d'amour* (June 1878), to find the critic stressing Zola's 'severa imparzialità' and conception of characters as so many 'fatti da osservare'.[25] This piece, however, betrays the influence of De Sanctis's recent 'Studio sopra Emilio Zola' with its insistence on the 'perfetta indifferenza dell'artista'.[26] De Sanctis, in fact, directly (and possibly consciously) contradicts Capuana in stating that Zola observes his characters 'con inesorabile severità di giudice anzi che con cuore commosso di poeta'.[27] What poetry there is derives from a frustrated idealism. Zola possesses a mere 'mezza coscienza' of the ideal which 's'infiltra senza sua saputa' into every corner of his narrative.[28] This is perhaps not far from the 'sentimento elevato quasi sdegnoso',[29] which, for Capuana, characterizes Zola's poetic voice, but one senses that the reviewer of *Une page d'amour* feels that he has been rebuked by an acknowledged critical master. Eagerness to conform to the DeSanctisian line ensures that Capuana's subsequent discourse on Zola loses much of its flexibility. He becomes less ready to acknowledge the creative juxtaposition of narrative techniques and the presence of an empathetic narrator.

It is vital to underline that the flexibility of Capuana's original approach is sanctioned by Zola's own critical writings of the 1870s. These are far from dogmatic with regards to the degree of narratorial intervention permitted in the naturalist novel. Discussions of the influence of Zola's aesthetics on *verismo*, have drawn predominantly on *Le Roman expérimental*, a work published in volume-form only after the completion of the first *Giacinta*. Here, it is customary to underline Zola's insistence that the objective novelist 'disparaît [...], garde pour lui son émotion' and his warning that 'l'intervention passionée ou attendrie de l'écrivain rapetisse un roman [...] en introduisant un élément étranger aux faits qui détruit leur valeur scientifique'.[30] Yet Zola stresses that this need not imply the total excision of the author's personality which may be given full rein in the *a priori* hypothesis, in 'style', and in 'forme'.[31] He maintains, in fact, that his peers give 'une prépondérance exagérée à la forme' and that,

if 'la méthode' is uniform, we must accept 'toutes les rhétoriques qui se produiront'.[32] One struggles to envisage an objective technique which bears no necessary formal or stylistic corollaries, but it is significant that Zola should reserve a foothold for the writer's personality at all.

Within a French context, in fact, Zola is by no means the staunchest proponent of impersonality, a concept which might be construed as the awkward legacy of a previous generation. As a fledgling critic, he prefers the 'besoin de passion et de larme' of Coppée, bearer of 'le drapeau du naturalisme en poésie' to the studied 'impassibilité' of the *Parnassiens*.[33] In *Mes haines* (1866), he demands 'une large place pour la personnalité', wondering 'ce que deviendrait l'art sans elle', and even declares himself 'un curieux qui n'a pas de grandes règles, et qui se penche volontiers sur toutes les oeuvres pourvu qu'elles soient l'expression forte d'un individu'.[34] The young Zola envies the cold detachment of Stendhal but confesses a weakness for novelists moved to pity by the suffering which they unveil and who forsake 'l'égoisme curieux de l'artiste pour la tendresse rude du moraliste'.[35] This early tolerance for authorial participation in the narrated world is not restricted to Zola's critical writings. He chooses not to write a preface for the first edition of *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) in the belief that 'ayant l'habitude de dire tout haut ma pensée, d'appuyer même sur les moindres détails de ce que j'écris, j'espérais être compris et jugé sans explication préalable'.[36]

Over the 1870s, Zola comes to accept the eclipse of the author as a corollary of naturalist poetics but never entirely proscribes the subjective element. Indeed, his attempts to locate authoritative precursors of naturalism produce, in texts such as *Les Romanciers naturalistes* (1881), strikingly disparate pronouncements on novelistic technique. Discussing Flaubert, he disparages Balzac's *ex cathedra* comment and analysis,[37] yet writing on Balzac himself, judges these consistent with the novelist's role as 'docteur ès sciences sociales' and puzzles at Taine's talk of gratuitous interventions.[38] He will even countenance Balzac's explicit moral stance, arguing that he portrayed his world admirably precisely

'parce qu'il souffrait de son temps'.[39] Even discussing *Madame Bovary*, he both comments that 'l'écrivain accomplit un prodige: disparaître complètement, et pourtant faire partout sentir son grand art' and echoes *Mes haines* by asserting that. after this landmark, 'il n'y avait plus pour chaque romancier qu'à suivre la voie tracée en affirmant son tempérament particulier'.[40] Daudet, meanwhile, is praised for imbuing his characters with 'une vie littéraire toute chaude de sa personnalité'.[41] Throughout his critical career, Zola applauds a distinctly personal vision more frequently than he underlines unnecessary intrusions.

A largely Italian phenomenon, then, the absolute identification of Zola with the poetics of impersonality is a corollary of the delayed impact of earlier realist novelists who found an unreceptive terrain in post-*Risorgimento* Italy.[42] Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, even Balzac and Stendhal impinge almost simultaneously on the Italian literary consciousness in the 1870s, provoking much misattribution of theories and innovations. Zola has an obvious appeal for those critics who censure authorial intervention while clinging to a moral agenda. In his article on *L'Assommoir*, Capuana, in fact, shows a sensitivity to the complexity of Zola's poetics missing in his peers. He observes how Zola's narrative technique consists in an interplay of perspectives, shifting between internal, external, and zero focalization,[43] and detects a tension between the 'severità' stressed by De Sanctis and a capacity for empathy.

If Capuana subsequently follows De Sanctis in stressing Zola's clinical rigour, the tension between 'severità' and 'commozione artistica' located in *L'Assommoir* is nonetheless central to the elaboration of the first *Giacinta*. Recent critics have underlined the frequent moral and sentimental interventions of Capuana's narrator. They trace these to a latent conservatism which rejects the amoral determinism of naturalist psychology and causes Capuana to compromise with the bourgeois melodrama. One must not, however, overlook Capuana's fear that a dispassionate naturalist analysis may starve his work of emotional impact. Perhaps Capuana does not struggle between conflicting but

equally tempting narrative techniques so much as weigh 'severità' against 'commozione artistica'. As Capuana manoeuvres between the differing perspectives juggled by Zola, conspicuous authorial intrusions may thus arise from the twin fears of losing readerly interest and undermining the novel's scientific seriousness.

Turning now to the 1879 text, we shall certainly find that Capuana's most jarring interventions stem from a conflict of psychological norms. We shall see that he fails to achieve a formal synthesis between a cautious naturalism and a Hegelian faith in freedom through self-awareness. Our study of Capuana's early critical essays suggests, however, that he *consciously* negotiates a path between contrasting techniques of focalization. On the one hand, he follows the theorists of the *Rivista minima* and *Rassegna settimanale* in balancing the dramatic and the analytical. On the other, he seeks to capture Zola's fusion of empathy and objectivity. Shortly after the novel's completion, Capuana defines 'l'arduo problema che deve risolvere ad ogni momento la vera arte moderna' as the need to 'infondere la vita alle sue creature nello stesso tempo che le disarticola e le scompone con spietata e serena freddezza'.[44] We must be careful not to replace the desiccated theorist of Croceian tradition with the inadvertent reflector of a prevailing conservative ideology, If *Giacinta* is ultimately a failure then it is largely, as we shall see, the result of conscious formal and ideological choices.

## 3. *The 1879 'Giacinta'*

*Giacinta* may be divided into four temporal sequences: a) an opening *in media res* (Chapter 1), b) a lengthy analepsis covering Giacinta's childhood and adolescence which rejoins the first narrative shortly before her marriage to the *conte* Grippa di San Celso (Chapters 2-5), c) the heroine's adulterous apotheosis culminating in the birth of her child by Andrea Gerace (Chapters 6-9), and, d) the plotting of the path to suicide as Giacinta's child dies, and her relationship with Gerace dissolves (Chapters 10-12).

a) *Chapter 1*

Recent formal analyses of the novel have privileged the first chapter. The narrative techniques of this set-piece opening sequence have, however, been represented in widely divergent terms. Madrignani, for example, perceives magisterial zero focalization,[45] lamenting the 'explicit' presentation of character and the use of rhetorically motivated exposition.[46] Judith Davies, conversely, applauds 'a remarkable but not entirely successful attempt at total dissociation from the narrative material'.[47] She underlines the renunciation of omniscience and representation of psychology through gesture alone. Ultimately, however, she finds that the technique proves unwieldy, forcing the narrator into over-elaborate conjecture and the characters into theatrical contortions.

We shall examine this chapter in some detail in order to demonstrate that Capuana seeks to incorporate both modes of focalization within a coherent narrative strategy. Capuana's expositional techniques, we shall find, are neither as retrograde nor as innovative as rival interpretations have suggested. We shall see that they establish a closer nexus between protagonist and milieu than recent criticism has allowed. Ultimately, however, they direct us to question how far Giacinta's behaviour is determined by societal factors.

The chapter describes a soirée in the Marulli drawing-room. There is much in the opening exchange between the heroine and her suitor Ranzelli to support Davies's assertion that external focalization is the dominant mode. There is no immediate psychological insight. Telling gestures are scrupulously underlined. The narrator affects to hear dialogue imperfectly, employing a barrage of modalizing locutions: 'sembrava', 's'indovinava', 'si vedeva'.[48] The pretence of ignorance is, however, rapidly discarded as he provides a potted biography of Ranzelli and an insight into his intentions towards Giacinta. Yet it would be a mistake to perceive in this sequence an awkward juxtaposition of the detached and intrusive. This is no bold

experiment with camera-eye narration abandoned when it proves beyond Capuana's technical reach. External focalization simply functions as a framing device.

The initial outside view of characters into whose psyche we shall subsequently delve is one of the solidest conventions of the nineteenth-century novel. The emphasis on gesture is no response to De Sanctis's demand that a character be made to do rather than say what he thinks. Nor does it foreshadow the behaviourism of the early Maupassant. If Capuana has a mentor here, it can only be Dumas *fils*, whose careful plotting of 'la gestualità dell'amore' does not preclude psychological omniscience.[49]

The presentation of Ranzelli is consistent with a narrative strategy whereby Capuana *encircles* his heroine in a manner canonical to the realist tradition. Initial external focalization gives way to the filtered perceptions of an interested but marginal observer. Zero focalization upon Ranzelli smoothes the way for privileged psychological insight into Giacinta. We do not, however, step directly from one psyche to the other. Giacinta's thought-processes continue to be surmised on the evidence of her reactions. Gesture, however, is made to convey an increasingly improbable degree of significance. Narratorial interpretation gradually frees itself of external stimulus until we are presented with an unambiguously privileged insight when the narrator alerts us to the embarrassment which Giacinta conceals behind 'un'aria franca e indifferente con tale abilità da ingannare i più sospettosi' (p. 8).

Two points must be underlined here. Firstly, one may, from a Lubbockite perspective, dismiss these shifts in focalization as trickery. One must acknowledge, however, that they constitute an efficient and coherent expositional device. Secondly, through the use of modalizing locutions and the insistence that our first *aperçu* of Giacinta contradicts that of numerous onlookers, Capuana establishes an oppressive atmosphere of malign but inept observation, simultaneously eliciting sympathy for his prickly heroine and warning us against hasty judgments.

Narratologists have traced to the early years of naturalism a transition between two forms of novelistic *incipit*. An initial feigned ignorance of one's characters gives way to the immediate assumption of familiarity.[50] Formally, then, Capuana might seem to lag behind his peers. We may be tempted to concur with Madrignani's analysis of Capuana's expositional method. After the initial, teasing external focalization, the narrator may appear to revert to an 'explicit' presentation of psychology. We have, of course, seen that, like most of his Italian contemporaries, Capuana has, in the period 1877-79, little quarrel with direct authorial analysis. He would not thus contravene the laws of impersonality but conform to pre-*verista* standards of objectivity. However, a closer examination of the narrative stance employed in the opening chapter of *Giacinta* reveals that exposition is a little more intrinsic than Madrignani allows. There is evidence of the cautious adoption of an intradiegetic perspective.

The narrator may appear less a disembodied visual angle than a sceptical, curious frequenter of the *salotto Marulli*. We might infer a degree of familiarity as he habitually refers to the heroine as 'la Giacinta'. Critics have persistently lamented this and other stilted Tuscanisms. Yet rather than an aspiration to linguistic purity, we might detect here an attempt to personify the narrator as a representative of Giacinta's society, largely sympathetic to the heroine if ultimately blinkered by convention.

Similarly, the much-criticized sporadic use of the first person -- 'credo' (p. 6), 'stavo per dire' (p. 44) -- signals not blatant intervention but an effort to underline an intradiegetic narrator's fallibility. (The use of homodiegesis as a framing device in an otherwise heterodiegetic narrative is again canonical to the realist tradition. One need only think of *Madame Bovary*.) Even the psychological presentation of Ranzelli is not altogether rhetorically motivated. Much of what we learn is common knowledge, Ranzelli having plainly broadcast his intentions ('si era finalmente incontrato, diceva, in una donna affatto diversa dalle altre' (p. 7)). Only gradually are we granted insights which

might appear beyond the reach of a well-informed frequenter of the *salotto*.[51] Capuana does not so much intervene authorially, then, as create an intradiegetic persona to be employed in framing narratives throughout the novel.

Hints of a perspective within the narrated world may permit us to find the character-sketches of secondary characters less gratuitously caricatural than has hitherto been allowed. There is the careful suggestion that these are the work of a malign gossip rather than an extradiegetic moralist. Yet recent critics have seen in such perfunctory characterization a major subversion of the naturalist ethos on the part of a fundamentally conservative novelist. Madrignani, for example, denounces a pseudo-scientific effort to isolate the protagonists and to depict psychological processes *in vitro*, which merely betrays Capuana's deep-seated reluctance to posit an authentic relationship between milieu and individual behaviour.[52]

There can be little doubt that the sketchy treatment of all characters but Giacinta and Andrea Gerace is intentional. In the 1889 preface, Capuana claims that he sought to cast 'tutta la luce dell'analisi' on the central couple, relegating 'al secondo piano ogni altra figura, abbozzandola appena, accennandola con pochi e rapidi tocchi, unicamente in servigio del rilievo che intendevo dare a quelle due'.[53]

There is supporting evidence for this assertion in his critical writings of the 1870s, where Gualdo and Sacchetti are praised for disregarding minor characters lest they detract from the intensely realized protagonists.[54] His most conspicuous narrative models are, however, French. The use of anthropomorphic imagery to characterize a milieu of shady financiers inevitably evokes Balzac. In a silent sequential survey of the Marulli's guests, each portrayed in exuberantly grotesque terms, Capuana equally clearly strives to achieve the *tableaux vivants* which punctuate Zola's *La Curée*.[55]

One should stress that Capuana's practice of restricting immobile secondary characters to a repertoire of absurd phrases and gestures, and of equipping them with caricatural names (the sneering Mochi, the frivolous Merli, the bestial Ratti) has a respectable tradition in the realist novel. One need only think of Dostoevsky's fondness for the punning epithet. Does, however, Capuana subvert the convention by caricaturizing to a degree which forbids any convincing interplay between foreground and background?

Again, the presentation of the *salotto Marulli* must be approached as part of an expositional strategy. Capuana seeks less to isolate a guinea-pig than to contrive a positive primacy effect. Given that Giacinta's subsequent actions will test the tolerance of his bourgeois readership (and that she may appear signally malign in her opening exchange with Ranzelli), he is at pains to cast his heroine in a favourable light. Initially, he seeks not so much to motivate her behaviour *vis-à-vis* society as to assure that we at least share her contempt for it. Whichever mode of focalization he adopts, omniscient, camera-eye, intradiegetic, the narrator effectively adopts Giacinta's ideological perspective throughout this chapter.

In his eagerness to share in her outrage, we may, of course, feel that Capuana flouts the scientific ethos of naturalism. Yet we have seen him praise Zola for his 'sentimento elevato quasi sdegnoso' and, in the wake of De Sanctis, underline the French writer's 'severità'. He may not, then, deem controlled indignation to be altogether incompatible with the poetics of objectivity. We have also indicated that excessively judgmental observations may be credited to a fallible intradiegetic narrator.

As the object of focalization shifts, via an overview of the *salotto Marulli*, from Ranzelli to Giacinta, the hints of an intradiegetic perspective gradually diminish. As we slowly gain access to the heroine's psyche, there is no suggestion of internal focalization. There is little indirect free speech in the first *Giacinta*, little creative interference between the voices of narrator and

protagonist. The predominant narrative mode might best be described, in Dorrit Cohn's terms, as consonant psychonarration: non-critical zero focalization upon a single psyche.[56]

This does not preclude occasional privileged insights into other characters. The acerbic portrait of Giacinta's mother denotes unqualified omniscience. One might feel that zero focalization is forced upon the narrator in this case. The presentation of so consummate an actress might over-stretch the fallible intradiegetic perspective hitherto employed. Yet perhaps the shift in focalization is somewhat less cumbersome than this might imply. Firstly, it is essential to establish a backdrop of malign but superficial observation in order convincingly to persuade us of *signora* Marulli's power. Secondly, wary of potential reactions to a heroine who in this chapter alone flirts cynically with Ranzelli and informs Andrea that she might become his mistress but never his wife, Capuana is anxious to dictate our reception of *signora* Marulli.

In his quest to assure an unambiguously negative primacy effect, he is on safe ground. The *mondaine* who sacrifices maternal instinct to ambition is the bugbear of much Italian writing of the 1870s. One thinks in particular of Tronconi's *Madri per ridere* and Dossi's *Desinenza in a*. Capuana may well have felt that an unsentimental demolition of the mother-cult was entirely consistent with severe objectivity. We might recall that he praises Jules Vallès for overturning 'tutti i classici ideali delle solite mamme candite'.[57]

In their efforts to stress the influence of hereditary and physiological factors upon Giacinta's behaviour, recent commentators have understated the *moral* shortcomings of her background. To regret a disregard for societal factors is to overlook hints that a rampant quest for profit undermines family structures. It is parental neglect that renders the young Giacinta vulnerable. We shall see that milieu plays a conspicuous role in determining Giacinta's tragedy. The implied critique of society, however, with its traditional emphasis on individual mores, is

altogether less radical than that associated with French naturalism. Rather than seeing in Capuana a cautious progressive ultimately undermined by a latent conservatism, it is more meaningful to posit a figure who employs elements of naturalism to bolster a fundamentally conservative social ideology.

Extensive psychological analysis, of both Giacinta and her mother, preface the novel's first dramatic scene in accordance with a pattern sanctioned, as we have seen, by Capuana's Italian critical peers. The exchange between Giacinta and Andrea, plainly conceived as a virtuoso set-piece, betrays an excessive debt to Dumas *fils*. As Giacinta alludes to a dark secret which prevents her from marrying,[58] her cadences loudly Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux camélias*.[59] Recent commentators have instanced Giacinta's theatrical tirades against 'la società' as further evidence of Capuana's inability to establish a convincing nexus between individual and milieu. Yet Giacinta's insistence that societal factors dictate her behaviour is already offset by two alternative readings of her psyche.

On one hand, there is her niggling suspicion that she is merely 'fatta male' (p. 14). On the other, imperfect self-vision is signalled as she pauses to contemplate her blurred reflection in a mirror (pp. 14-15). In this opening chapter, Capuana consciously presents his heroine as an enigma, leaving us uncertain whether to judge her the victim of a materialist society, faulty genes, or a fatal lack of self-knowledge.

Our analysis of the opening chapter of *Giacinta* has shown that Capuana employs a coherent expositional strategy, combining external, internal, and zero focalization in a gradual encirclement of his heroine, and aiming to create a strong negative primacy effect in his evocation of milieu. Arguing against a critical tradition that regrets a failed fusion of character and environment, we have underlined a pre-naturalist exposé of the moral shortcomings of contemporary society. Finally, we have noted that Capuana plays contrasting interpretations of his heroine's behaviour off against each other. It is primarily this

tussle of psychological models and its formal implications which will concern us as we examine the main body of the text.

b) *Chapters 2-5*

The extended analepsis which constitutes the second section of the novel is quite explicitly rhetorically motivated. After the canonical opening *in media res*, an extradiegetic narrator takes the reader on a leisurely detour. Still observed by Balzac and the brothers Goncourt, this convention is largely abandoned by Zola. The relatively few retrospective passages in Zola's work are generally tied to a protagonist's memory-act. In his failure to link analepsis to a consciousness within the narrated world, Capuana again places himself firmly within a pre-naturalist tradition.

In Chapters 2-5, however, the epic structure of the realist novel is cautiously undermined. Giacinta's formative years are rendered not as a linear chronicle but as a succession of iterative plateaux, the gaps between which are plugged by further analepses. These, in turn, splinter into self-contained iterative sequences, and, as analepsis unfolds within analepsis, the narrative comes to resemble a Chinese box. This is no bold attempt to import naturalist poetics thwarted by a latent traditionalism. In its expositional techniques, *Giacinta* continues to suggest a work which selectively incorporates elements of naturalism within the framework of the late realist, post-*scapigliato* Italian novel.

An examination of the psychological models employed in these chapters similarly reveals an *exploration* of naturalist theory from the perspective of post-Unitary reformism. We shall see that Capuana downplays the hereditary factors dear to Zola and rejects the lay fatalism of French naturalism. Environmental factors, conversely, are methodically logged. Yet, as the adolescent heroine awakens to self-consciousness, Capuana hints that she exaggerates the sway of milieu and fails to appreciate her substantial freedom of action. A zero-focalizing narrative, however, proves incapable of accommodating conflicting approaches to his heroine's psyche. Having authoritatively traced

and analysed her formative influences, he struggles to persuade us that she forges her own fate.

The analepsis begins with a brief study of Giacinta's parents. Recent commentators have detected evidence here that Capuana stresses the primacy of hereditary factors. Certainly, there is the suggestion that if her mother is slave to the worst 'istinti animali' (p. 19) without 'la folle sensualità che avrebbe potuto, se non iscusarli, spiegarli', Giacinta inherits those instincts precisely in the form of exasperated sensuality. She plainly shares much of her mother's capricious, combative nature. The influence of Zola is apparent both in the ruthless exposure of depravity and in a puritanical scorn by no means alien to the author of *Thérèse Raquin*.

The genetic legacy of Giacinta's father, however, is more questionable. For Madrignani, it consists in dormant atavistic violence which skips a generation.[60] In the narrator's words, *signor* Marulli's physiognomy suggests that 'sotto quell'apparente torpore si dovesse nascondere un carattere violento, brutale ma non era così' (p. 17). Yet this could equally well be read as a warning against the adoption of an exclusively physiological approach. One might feel, moreover, that Giacinta inherits a sufficient dose of brutality from her mother. An interpretation popular amongst the novel's early critics suggests further grounds for querying Giacinta's paternal legacy.

Pietro Vetro (1922), Luigi Tonelli (1928), and Giuseppe Marchese (1964) argue that the endowment later bestowed upon Giacinta by a mysterious Parisian relative implies that she is no daughter of *signor* Marulli.[61] Recent commentators are over-hasty in dismissing this episode as a gratuitous *coup de théâtre* which exposes Capuana's ultimate indifference to environmental factors. *Signora* Marulli's visits to her infant-daughter in the company of a lover and the narrator's malign insinuation that, for all her romanticism, 'aveva finalmente dovuto sposare il signor Paolo Marulli, non ricco, non bello, con quasi il doppio dell'età sua, ma che aveva però la qualità non ispregevole di essere *un marito per*

*davvero* [my italics]' (p. 18) surely led contemporary readers to question Giacinta's legitimacy. Capuana, then, provides only half of a genetic equation. He thus already signals a sceptical attitude towards biological determinism. Later, even Giacinta's maternal legacy will be undermined.

While over-stressing genetic factors, recent commentators have consistently overlooked a lucid but conservative analysis of the societal factors which govern Giacinta's upbringing. Capuana's narrative energies are devoted to underlining, with moralistic emphasis, instances of maternal neglect,[62] attributed not to inherited vice but to the unfettered self-interest sanctified in the *arriviste salotto Marulli.*

Of modest origins and frustrated in her efforts to snare a rich husband, *signora* Marulli cultivates lovers in the financial world, maintaining a lifestyle beyond her status. Giacinta is a mere encumbrance to one consumed by 'tutti i bassi vizii, del lusso, della gola, dell'avidità del denaro' (p. 19). If Capuana stresses the moral shortcomings of the unnatural mother rather than the underlying societal trend, it is due to a belief that reform can only begin with the individual citizen.

The link between the dissolution of the family and unprincipled capitalism is, however, made quite explicit when Giacinta returns from college to find her former chambers occupied by the *Banca Agricola Provinciale* and her parents living in ill-gained luxury. *Signora* Marulli now discusses finance as competently as her lover Savani, director of the bank and criminal speculator.

Judith Davies rightly argues that parental neglect causes greater psychological damage than the rape inflicted upon the heroine by the serving-boy Beppe.[63] Giacinta senses that the withholding of maternal affection robs her of 'qualcosa di intimo e di essenziale alla sua vita che, tolto un volta, capiva non le si sarebbe potuto restituire mai più' (p. 40). It is neglect, moreover, which first leads her to seek Beppe's company. Their growing intimacy derives from a hunger for affection rather than precocious

inherited sensuality. The childish caresses which awaken Beppe's lust stem from Giacinta's fear that her unpredictable friend will desert her (p. 28). His sexual excitement remains incomprehensible to her ('la guardava con occhiate insistenti e di un significato che la bimba non sapeva spiegarsi' (p. 29)). The 'compiacimento malsano' (p. 33) which eventually overcomes the 'buona e innocenta bimba' is attributed to her sense of sampling a 'frutto vietato', of transgressing a maternal interdict, rather than to an authentic erotic awakening.[64]

Yet while portraying Giacinta as a victim of environment, Capuana begins to insinuate that her later difficulties may be partly self-inflicted. There is early evidence of an obsessive nature and of the distorting capacity of an imagination left to feed on itself. Improvised games with household flotsam foreshadow a propensity for baroque mental constructions:

> Arnesi e mattoni diventarono per la bimba una sorgente d'inesauribile svago e di occupazioni seriissime. Spostava gli oggetti da un angolo all'altro, ne faceva dei mucchi, delle sfilate, dando ad ogni capo una destinazione immaginaria, spesso spesso attribuendo ad essi anima e pensiero come a creature viventi. (p. 23)

A weakness for the *idée fixe* is prefigured by her absorbed contemplation of mundane objects. An obsessive mentality and precociously analytical bent are fed by Giacinta's college exile where 'ogni minima cosa la forzava a riflettere' (p. 38). These combine with a continued quest for affection to produce an intense passion for a classmate's sweetheart and a retrospective cult of Beppe for whom she conceives an incongruous 'affetto ideale' (p. 40). We detect, in this process of idealization, the model for her masochistic relationship with the almost equally vulgar Andrea.

The suggestion that Giacinta's perceptions are distorted permits Capuana gradually to temper his critique of society. He implies that she judges her milieu with excessive cynicism. An exacerbated sense of the stigma attached to a rape-victim leads

her to suspect 'sottintesi anche nelle domande più semplici' (p. 44). Her outlook is further jaundiced by her association with the maidservant Marietta who, abandoned by a seducer, maligns all men, and by the worldly education that she receives from the old *roué* Mochi.

The constant 'rimuginío di sentimenti e di fatti' (p. 72) provokes in Giacinta 'una completa allucinazione' where 'le proporzioni delle cose si alteravano, i rapporti tra fatti e fatti non si mostravano più'. Impelled by the logic of the absurd,[65] Giacinta moves towards 'una di quelle risoluzioni che gravano sull'intera vita come un irremovibile masso' (p. 86): the decision to defy society by openly maintaining a lover. She will learn to her cost that 'le conseguenze di una falsa premessa non si sfuggono mai'.

Madrignani cites these narratorial interjections as evidence of Capuana's failure to master the impersonal technique.[66] Clearly, as Giacinta approaches adulthood, Capuana introduces a bifocal technique where the heroine's increasingly distorted perceptions are undercut by those of a dispassionate narrator. One should, nonetheless, stress that explicit narratorial comment is designed as an objective corrective to Giacinta's vision, as the counterbalancing of 'commozione' with 'severità'. It may, in short, be viewed as a primitive form of impersonality.

A more serious objection is that a zero-focalizing narrator often appears to dismiss data which he has himself supplied. What is conceived as an exercise in ruthless objectivity simply reveals Capuana's difficulty in navigating between a deterministic view of the psyche and a faith in the free consciousness.

We are readily persuaded that the marginalized adolescent falls prey to obsession and provides easy sport for malcontents and philanderers. Yet we may feel that her critique of society is amply supported by evidence monologically supplied within an unambiguously authorial narrative situation. There is no suggestion that the earlier analysis of paternal neglect within a

rapacious milieu is Giacinta's own. Indeed the narrator is at pains to stress the good will of the 'innocent' child.

Giacinta herself sees her actions as rigidly determined. She has been trapped since birth in the coils of a 'fatal catena' (p. 78). Childhood experience has forged an unalterable character: 'Son cresciuta fin oggi abbandonata a me stessa...; vo' continuare all'ugual modo. Il carattere non si rifà... ' (p. 65). Arguing that 'il collegio ci rende tal quali ci ha avute' (p. 66), she maintains that formal education exerts little authentic influence.

Plainly, Giacinta cannot hope to defeat society as, in her own analysis, it is society which wills her to self-destructive revolt. She is dimly aware that, in assuming the role of scapegoat, of sacrificial victim, she merely plays society's game. Capuana lays the groundwork for the exposure of a system which so clinically disposes of the marginalized, yet, as this section draws to its close, he increasingly hints that Giacinta has greater room for manoeuvre than she appreciates

We become aware of an unresolved tension at the heart of the novel. An excoriating critique of societal factors is counterbalanced by suggestions that their impact on the individual may be exaggerated. One must not, however, understate the extent to which Giacinta is presented as the product of a venal, alienating milieu. Her very overwillingness to blame society is, paradoxically, the result of societally sanctioned parental neglect. If Capuana rejects his heroine's lay fatalism, it is partly due to a faith in the values of a paternalistic 'Middle Italy' temporally hidden beneath the noisy speculations of the *salotto Marulli*, and partly to the pre-naturalist conviction that conditioning cannot defeat the individual will.

Central to Capuana's strategy is the heroine's brief religious crisis, too often dismissed as a borrowing from *Madame Bovary*. For most critics of *Giacinta*, ideological authority is invested solely in the positivist doctor Follini. From this perspective, the attempted reconciliation between the religious and scientific world-view in

Capuana's second novel *Profumo* represents a neo-idealist renunciation of naturalism. Yet the heroine's confessor, 'un vecchio venerando, un parroco per davvero' (p. 83), is the most positively portrayed character in *Giacinta*. It is he rather than the ironically delineated Follini who is at the ideological heart of the novel.

Capuana underlines the superficiality of Giacinta's sudden resolution to take religious vows by stressing the exclusively secular nature of her upbringing. Given Capuana's zeal in exposing the moral shortcomings of his heroine's milieu, the ridicule to which religion is exposed in the *salotto Marulli* clearly highlights once again the collapse of traditional values within a speculative culture.[67]

Doubting the authenticity of Giacinta's calling, her confessor suggests that God is testing her. If she were to conquer her fear of opprobrium through 'piena rassegnazione' (p. 84), her sufferings might cease. Revolted by the thought of 'tale umiliazione', Giacinta abandons her plan, convinced that even God has cast her out. Her tragedy, Capuana implies, is a misunderstanding of the concept of resignation. She sees not spiritual resilience in the face of prejudice but passive acceptance of society's judgment. In equating resignation with renunciation, she pre-empts the protagonists of Capuana's later novels. In these, the need to understand resignation as an active virtue -- as reconciliation with the body, as the location of the ideal in the real, as the synthesis of contending forces -- acquires increasing importance. Indeed, it will provide the title of Capuana's final novel *Rassegnazione,* which portrays a conflict between rival definitions of the concept.

On the rare occasions where Giacinta glimpses that resignation implies the exercise of the individual will, she hastily concludes that she is too proud to attain it. What Giacinta's religious velleities reveal most strongly, in fact, is an eagerness to annul her will: 'Voglio legarmi per sempre, per sempre!' (p. 84).

Frustrated in her quest for spiritual marriage, she instantly seeks an equally binding union with the *conte* Grippa di San Celso.

Again, however, the narrator's underlining of Giacinta's misconceptions may appear rather easy sport. He persuasively outlines how societal factors marginalize Giacinta, and how, in isolation, she comes to see her life as rigidly preconditioned. Yet he fails to signal how she might have developed a counterbalancing faith in the freedom of her consciousness and in the autonomy of her will.

It is perhaps an awareness that monologically presented narrative only too convincingly motivates actions purportedly based on a 'falsa premessa' that leads Capuana to produce the *coup de théâtre* of the mysterious bequest. This might be deemed a tactical error on Capuana's part. Financially independent, Giacinta is free to marry the impecunious Andrea. Her subsequent revolt might thus appear gratuitous as she has no compelling need to contract a sham marriage and to maintain a lover publicly. This, however, is *precisely* Capuana's intention. The bequest affords Giacinta the liberty of action which may, thus far, have been denied her. It is a stratagem permitting Capuana to sidestep the determinism of naturalist psychology and to portray a heroine who forges her own fate.

The appearance of Andrea Gerace towards the end of the extended analepsis is a further means by which Capuana undercuts Giacinta's lay fatalism. From one perspective, societal factors play a greater role in the Andrea/Giacinta relationship than recent critics have allowed. This is no hermetic passion detached from its milieu. What brings the couple together is precisely a shared sense of marginalization. Set against the stigmatized Giacinta is a southern incomer of indeterminate social origin whose position at the *Banca Agricola Provinciale* falls ambiguously between the clerical and managerial. The couple's isolation is objectively motivated: they are alienated rather than idealized.

On the other hand, it is insufficiently remarked how little background information we receive on Andrea in a novel habitually termed naturalist. For the *salotto Marulli*, he is 'un coso piovuto dalle nuvole, che si spacciava per cadetto di un'antica famiglia' (p. 138). Capuana does nothing to clarify his provenance. This is not simply a throwback to the enigmatic hero of the romantic novel. As he seeks to play down the impact of societal and hereditary factors, Capuana introduces a character whom we are simply required to accept as a given.

In Chapters 2-5, then, Capuana initially charts the impact of milieu on the young Giacinta while signalling scepticism as to the role of genetics. He suggests how the very factors which marginalize his heroine may distort her self-perception and understanding of society. Yet, as he seeks to undermine Giacinta's conviction that her actions are predetermined, he effectively backtracks, contradicting monologically presented data. Within a zero-focalizing narrative, Capuana fails to achieve a synthesis of conflicting psychological models. In the following section of the novel, protagonist and narrator exchange roles. Where Giacinta believes that she has broken the 'fatal catena', an insistent narrative voice warns of the inevitable consequences of her 'falsa premessa'.

c) *Chapters 6-9*

As we rejoin the first narrative with Giacinta's engagement, Capuana again stresses the voluntary nature of her actions. Her masochistic pleasure in binding herself to the cretinous *conte* Grippa di San Celso derives from 'una tal quale voluttà nel subire rassegnatamente un'afflizione che si sarebbe, volendo, potuto evitare senza sforzo' (p. 94). 'Ci si sente', the narrator adds, 'nel pieno esercizio della propria libertà'. This, however, is psychologically inconsistent. If Capuana has sought to convince the reader of Giacinta's moral liberty, he has equally signalled that she, conversely, believes her will to be circumscribed.

We remain similarly unpersuaded by Giacinta's reactions upon carrying out her plan to cuckold the *conte* on his wedding night. She now has 'la coscienza di una rivolta compiuta, di una battaglia guadagnata, e l'altiero compiacimento di lanciare in quel modo la libera protesta del suo cuore' (p. 120). She has successfully exposed institutionalized hypocrisy by publicly flaunting the private mores of her milieu. She need not fear society's retaliation as, having taken a husband for appearance's sake, 'si era posta in regola con essa' (p. 109).

The narrator professes astonishment that she should act 'come se la lotta colla sua cattiva stella e col mondo fosse arrivata alla fine, coronata da un'immensa vittoria che non avrebbe più temuto rivincita di sorta per l'avvenire' (p. 132). He underlines the hubristic impetuosity with which she asks Andrea 'che doveva importargli di ciò che potessero dire e fare la sua mamma, la società, la terra, il cielo?' (p. 137). Yet Giacinta has already perceived that she is merely precipitating the catastrophe to which society wills her. Her 'revolt' is essentially conceived as a kamikaze assault. The elated heroine may now credibly trick herself into thinking that she has eluded her fate. We cannot, however, accept the narrator's insinuations that societal revenge is altogether unforeseen.

Having signalled that we are to view Giacinta's fate as largely self-willed, Capuana charts the inevitable consequences of her subversive gesture. As he exposes the machinations of a vindictive milieu, he paradoxically reverts to the deterministic analysis of the opening chapters. Society re-emerges in all its venality at Giacinta's wedding where a procession of the bloated *pezzi grossi* of the financial establishment is searingly depicted by an unambiguously zero-focalizing narrator.[68]

Giacinta consistently under-estimates a concerted campaign to disrupt her relationship with Andrea. She believes that she can foil the conspiracy by persuading Andrea to resign his post at the bank for a largely nominal engagement as her personal administrator. In so doing, she merely plays into society's hands.

The already marginalized Andrea is increasingly isolated in a provincial milieu where nepotism is all. Perceiving his financial dependence on Giacinta, he rapidly begins to strain at the leash.

Those who see little interplay between the lovers and their environment fail to remark that it is the very attempt to exist outwith society, to create a hermetic *vie à deux*, which dooms the relationship. As *Giacinta* progresses, milieu functions in a manner more *scapigliato* than naturalist. Rather than an immediate determinant, it becomes the prosaic 'reale' against which ideals founder.

Capuana, then, re-emphasizes societal factors both to persuade us that Giacinta's (freely chosen) fate is sealed, and to enlist sympathy for the heroine of what might otherwise resemble a linear morality tale. Yet we may feel that a return to the biting critique of the opening chapters retrospectively bolsters Giacinta's analysis of her milieu and reinforces her conviction that, prior to her marriage, her will is fettered.[69] There is a moment when the narrator seems inadvertently to acknowledge as much. A revolt hitherto portrayed as a long-premeditated act of will is unexpectedly recast as a 'disperata risoluzione' (p. 97).

It is perhaps in an effort to ease the conflict between deterministic and voluntaristic interpretations of Giacinta's 'revolt' that Capuana now introduces two fresh perspectives on her actions. We must also, however, bear in mind Capuana's desire to weigh 'severità' against 'commozione artistica' and his understandable anxiety that his scandalous heroine might alienate his bourgeois readership.

Firstly, the reader is not party to the planning of Giacinta's wedding-night *coup de théâtre*. The heroine is glimpsed solely through the perceptions of drawing-room gossips and the baffled Andrea. Both view her as an insoluble 'enimma' (p. 94). This may simply appear a crude means of triggering suspense. Yet Giacinta will increasingly be personified by an inscrutable 'mutolezza' (p. 96).

For Ghidetti (1980), she moves beyond the scope of naturalist psychology which proves ultimately powerless to penetrate the female condition.[70] The prevalence of the Sphinx-figure in Capuana's shorter fiction of the 1880s and 1890s certainly signals a growing scepticism towards positivist analysis. Here, however, he conscientiously scrutinizes Giacinta's psyche until repelled by the ideological and artistic implications of a deterministic methodology. A desire to safeguard the category of will combines with an anxiety that ruthless analysis should not choke Giacinta of artistic life. Yet the sudden withdrawal of privileged insight into Giacinta must appear gratuitous. Capuana's attempt to convince us of his heroine's irreducible complexity appears, rather, an effort to disguise his growing difficulty in reconciling positivist and idealist ideology and aesthetics.

Capuana's presentation of Giacinta as an enigma alternates with what we must term a process of idealization. In the second half of the novel, the heroine is gradually redeemed through her fidelity to Andrea. She comes to sacrifice herself for passion rather than ill-reasoned 'revolt'. Her romantic credentials are briskly established. First we are told of her horror of dividing sexual favours between two men. Conjugal relations strike her as a form of inverted adultery. We are assured that this is an unanticipated dilemma: 'e già vedeva apparecchiarsi una nuova e interminabile serie di patimenti e di lagrime che non aveva, in che guisa? menomamente prevista' (p. 111).

Such lack of prescience must appear improbable. Indeed the narrator inadvertently contradicts himself a few pages later with the assertion that conjugal obligations constitute 'un inferno [...] previsto e volontariamente accettato' (p. 121). This is a most telling slip. Striving to establish his heroine's virtue, Capuana depicts her 'revolt' as the irrational product of despair. Having rehabilitated Giacinta through nocturnal trysts in which 'non c'era neppur l'ombra di una volgare sensualità' (p. 116), he now seeks to temper our sympathy by recasting the self-same decision as lucid premeditation.

Giacinta's dilemma is resolved when the *salotto Marulli* finally succeeds in arousing her husband's suspicions. By confessing to adultery, she terminates conjugal relations and consequently purifies her union with Andrea.[71] She also, however, signals the weakening of her ambition to throw society's morality back in its face. She no longer seeks, even ironically, to keep up appearances. A self-destructive assault on convention gives way to the construction of an idyll.[72]

Capuana's redemptive zeal is most apparent in the passages dealing with the birth of Giacinta's child by Andrea. No opportunity is lost to contrast his heroine's rapturous reactions to pregnancy and maternity with those of her own 'unnatural' mother.[73] The expectant Giacinta experiences 'un'inesplicabile elevazione di tutta se stessa; un rigonfiamento di piacere che confondevasi colla infinità del cielo e colla profondità dell'abisso; una delizia senza nome' (p. 131). She conceives a veritable 'adorazione' (p. 154) for her new-born daughter which affords her 'delle vere estasi da santa' (p. 153).

Content in love and confidently planning her child's future, her hostility to society turns to contemptuous indifference. She now seeks only to create 'un mondo a parte, tutto suo' (p. 133), 'un nido' (p. 135) for her illegitimate family. So far does she mellow that she desires to confound society solely by proving that mutual fidelity exists.

As this process of romantic idealization gathers pace, the heroine increasingly appears to be punished less for her assault upon convention than for her presumptuous faith in the durability of passion. This will certainly be Giacinta's own interpretation of her downfall. She is keenly disturbed by her mother's assertion that she is a 'povera illusa, che credeva all'amore dell'uomo' (p. 144). Yet, it is not Andrea's undoubted fickleness which fatally undermines their relationship but Giacinta's own folly in seeking to step outwith society. Frustrated in its direct attempts to separate the couple, the *salotto Marulli* cannily opts to second

Giacinta's attempt to create a hermetic 'nido', confident that the ostracized Andrea will flee oppressive interdependence, and that a self-consuming passion will run its course. The gradual pollution of an idyll may recall Verga's *Eva* (1875) rather than naturalist models. One must not, however, overlook the dynamic relationship between protagonists and environment even when an idealized heroine appears to have transcended the influence of a depraved milieu.

Capuana, in fact, distances himself from Giacinta's romantic interpretation of her downfall. Mocking her mother's hypocritical disapproval of her relationship with Andrea, he terms adultery 'un peccato' (p. 142) into which *signora* Marulli has herself lapsed 'senza le attenuanti' of Giacinta. There may, then, be extenuating societal factors but the heroine is unambiguously identified as a sinner who will be punished by the loss of her child. Capuana nonetheless exploits the familiar tragic resonances of the death of passion as Giacinta comes to resemble the neurotic romantic heroine of much fiction of the 1860s and 1870s, from the morbid protagonists of Tarchetti and of Capuana's own *Profili di donne* (1877) to the over-sophisticated modern girl of the Goncourts' *Renée Mauperin* (1864).

In Chapters 6-9, then, Capuana contends with two problematic elements: a) the inability to bring will and determinism into convincing conflict, and b) anxiety lest the remorseless plotting of Giacinta's downfall produce a leaden exemplum and deprive her of artistic life. He thus alternates between mystificatory efforts to render his heroine an enigma and romantic idealization. Giacinta comes to resemble a martyr to passion rather than societal scapegoat or victim of faulty self-vision. In the final section of the novel, this process of idealization assumes increasingly moralistic overtones. Capuana now redeems his scandalous heroine through monogamous devotion.

d) *Chapters 10-12*

Central to Capuana's redemptive strategy are the observations of the family doctor Follini. For the young positivist, Giacinta displays pathological fidelity. Incapable of loving twice, she was born 'per essere una buona, un'onesta madre di famiglia' (p. 170). In his diagnosis, underwritten by the narrator, only circumstances have rendered her an adulteress. To accept this is to dismiss entirely the influence of a vicious genetic legacy. No naturalist would present the daughter of *signora* Marulli as predisposed to chastity. From the first aspersions cast on *signor* Marulli's paternity, Capuana systematically downplays hereditary factors.

We must, however, remain unconvinced by Follini's belief that Giacinta is ideally constituted for family life. The reader of Capuana's shorter fiction of the 1870s and 1880s would see in Giacinta a dangerous spouse. The tragic incompatibility of exclusive passion and marriage is perhaps the most prominent topos of the tales later collected in *Le appassionate* (1893). Follini merely serves to give a pallid romantic conceit a semblance of scientific credibility.

It is, moreover, difficult to reconcile Giacinta's intrinsically monogamous instincts with the narrator's assertion that, barring the Count's descent into cretinism, 'ella sarebbe tornata al marito collo stesso abbandono, colla stessa tenacità con cui si era già data e mantenuta fedele all'Andrea' (p. 189). In his zeal to redeem his heroine and to reveal her underlying virtue, Capuana falls into psychological inconsistency.[74]

As Judith Davies has suggested, Giacinta's platonic relationship with Follini itself serves to demonstrate that her moral sense and faith in the ideal remain intact.[75] Giacinta senses 'un'elevazione, una purificazione di tutta se stessa' (p. 187) when her thoughts turn to the doctor. This, however, cannot exhaust his narrative function. In the figure of Follini, Capuana presents a cogent critique of naturalist ideology and poetics from a Hegelian perspective.

It is a critical commonplace to present Follini as a cipher for the novelist himself. Croceian commentators, in particular, have seen in his rigorous observation of Giacinta a pedantic homage to naturalist principles. Yet the perception of Follini as a mere authorial *doppelgänger* raises three questions. Firstly, if, in the Croceian analysis, Capuana's narrative voice is aridly impersonal, why need he insert a dispassionate observer? Secondly, if Follini's positivistic note-taking is essential to Capuana's narrative strategy, why does he appear only three-quarters of the way through the novel? Finally, why does Follini forsake objectivity and fall for Giacinta?

Critics have generally focused on the first two of these questions. Croceians, like S. Eugene Scalia (1952) and V. P. Traversa (1968), attribute Capuana's introduction of Follini to an excess of scientific zeal which produces 'an unintentional autobiographical caricature of the naturalistic writer'.[76] This, however, is quite inconsistent with the cautious reception of determinist psychology that we have thus far outlined.

Most recent commentators, conversely, acknowledge something of Capuana's ambivalence to naturalism. The most influential is again Madrignani (1970), for whom Follini intervenes not to assure objectivity but to restore it. In Madrignani's analysis, Capuana abandons the exemplary naturalism of the childhood episodes as he comes progressively to empathize with his heroine. He thus introduces a dogmatic mouthpiece in a vain effort to elude the *romanzo rosa*.[77]

Yet we have seen Capuana *re-emphasize* environmental determinants as he seeks to persuade us of the inevitability of Giacinta's fate. Moreover, while the heroine is unarguably idealized, condemnation of her 'sin' is explicit. Rather than breaching impersonality, the narrator's moralistic comments might, we have suggested, signal severe objectivity. Follini's dispassionate presence might thus appear superfluous. We have also seen that Follini's pseudo-positivistic diagnoses themselves contribute to a process of idealization.

Some critics have modified Madrignani's thesis in order to permit a more positive interpretation of Follini's role. Annamaria Cavalli Pasini (1982) and Roberto Bigazzi (1968) suggest that Follini allows Capuana to alternate the perspectives of 'osservatore distaccato' and 'creatore participe'.[78] As with Madrignani, he appears just as empathy threatens to undermine the narrator's objectivity but constitutes a legitimate and efficacious device whereby Capuana may analyse his heroine without starving her of artistic life. Again, we must feel that this analysis overstates Capuana's collusion with his heroine. We may accept, however, that Follini's assumption of the scientific perspective partly dispenses the narrator from an awkward balancing of 'commozione artistica' and 'severità' as he seeks to generate an authentically tragic conclusion.

Unlike the majority of commentators, Cavalli Pasini also confronts the third question raised by Follini's intervention: why dispassionate analysis ends in anti-positivistic infatuation. Where Guido Davico Bonino (1980), another defender of Madrignani's thesis, brands this episode 'un'errore di strategia progettuale, che Zola probabilmente avrebbe seriamente disapprovato',[79] Cavalli Pasini observes that the amorous doctor is a staple of late realist/early naturalist fiction. She cites Verga's *Una peccatrice* (1866) and *Madame Bovary* (1857), to which one might add the rather later example of Zola's *Une page d'amour* (1878), favourably reviewed by Capuana.[80]

In her acknowledgment that the naturalist novel has a capacity for self-criticism and may question its own ideal of objectivity, Cavalli Pasini approaches the analysis of Mario Zangara (1964) and Enrico Ghidetti (1980), who both see the Follini episode as ironical.[81] For these critics, Giacinta becomes a symbol for all that scientific empiricism cannot penetrate. Follini's bafflement and subsequent infatuation form a coherent parable, underlining the ultimate vanity of the positivist adventure. In our analysis, we shall follow these critics in arguing that Follini is portrayed ironically. We shall see, however, that Capuana's irony goes

beyond playful self-referentiality or resigned scepticism to provide an incisive critique of positivist ideology.

Most critics begin their discussion of Follini by citing Chapter 10's detailed narratorial analysis of the young doctor's background and principles. Vitally, however, this is not our first introduction to Follini. Valued for his knowledge of 'la farmacopea americana' (p. 155), he is called to attend Giacinta's gout-ridden father at the end of Chapter 9. He provokes the scorn of two previously consulted older doctors by urging the application of curare, upon the effects of which, despite the urgency of the situation, he delivers a small lecture. The curare not only hastens the death of *signor* Marulli but provides Giacinta with the means to commit suicide. Follini's objectively calamitous intervention should colour our reading of the subsequent formal presentation, alerting us to elements of irony. Given, moreover, the caricatural nomenclature of most of the novel's secondary characters (Mochi, Merli, Ratti), Follini is not a name to inspire confidence.

Follini is introduced in the following terms:

> Egli era un medico filosofo, pel quale i nervi, il sangue, le fibre, le cellule non spiegavano tutto nell'individuo. Non credeva all'anima immortale; però credeva all'anima ed anche allo spirito: combinava Claudio Bernard, Wirchoff e Moleschott con Hegel e Spencer; ma il suo Dio era il De Meis della Università di Bologna. Si era impossessato così bene della dottrina del suo maestro, che ne aveva anche preso un po' lo stile e le maniere, specialmente il risolino caratteristico tra ingenuo e malizioso.
>
> La Giacinta lo aveva interessato sin dai primi giorni come un caso di patologia morale degno davvero di attenzione. In quella donna l'eredità naturale, l'organismo potevan servire a dipanare appena una metà del problema. E siccome per lui la medicina non consisteva soltanto nella diagnosi e nella cura del morbo, così non lasciava sfuggirsi nessuna occasione di raccogliere elementi scientifici, cioè fatti individuali provati, pel suo gran lavoro sull'uomo, ideato sin da quando si trovava all'Università bolognese. (pp. 160-61)

Madrignani rightly observes that Follini shares with Capuana an admiration for De Meis and an ambition to fuse positivism and Hegelianism.[82] If, however, Follini believes that nerves and heredity elucidate 'appena una metà del problema', Capuana has shown little sign of crediting either with a significant influence. He portrays, rather, a tussle between will and milieu. Indeed, it is only with Follini's appearance that a physiological perspective is introduced. There is clearly an element of self-portraiture in Follini but one must not overlook significant differences of emphasis between creator and character in their approach to the psyche.

Even in this introductory passage, one might, moreover, detect signs of *moral* divergence between the narrator and Follini. We may find Follini's imitation of his mentor's 'risolino' faintly ridiculous and bridle at his pomposity in viewing Giacinta as a case of 'patologia morale' ripe for his 'gran lavoro sull'uomo'. One might counter that this is merely the pomposity of the positivist age and fully shared by Capuana. Narratorial irony, however, becomes ever more explicit as Follini's interest in Giacinta is further glossed:

> Per quanto grande fosse la simpatia ispiritagli dalla Giacinta egli conservava rimpetto a lei la sua freddezza scientifica. La interrogava destramente, s'ingegnava di coglierla alla sprovveduta per sorprendere i sintomi nella loro schietta spontaneità; s'interessava alla evoluzione lenta e misteriosa con cui quel *bel caso* procedeva verso uno scioglimento certamente terribile, secondo gli pareva potesse indursi; ma arrestavasi lì. Il suo cuore di giovane e di poeta non dava segni di vita: la donna non lo tentava. Lo scienziato non voleva perdere, innamorandosi della Giacinta, il benefizio di un'osservazione così importante, così difficile a capitare un'altra volta; e si dominava e s'infrenava con padronanza tutta sua. (p. 161)

We detect hubris in the italicized 'bel caso', the serene contemplation of a distant catastrophe, the deadening of Follini's 'cuore di giovane e di poeta', and the vain *parti pris* not to fall in love. Follini is clearly destined to struggle between analytical

detachment and emotional involvement. Is he, then, a cipher for the novelist's attempts simultaneously to dissect and to vivify his protagonist? Capuana might then introduce Follini not to restore objectivity but as an ironic comment on his own inability to maintain it. There is much, however, to indicate significant ideological divergences between Capuana and Follini, and to suggest that the authorial irony is less gentle than this reading implies.

As Follini penetrates the *salotto Marulli* in his capacity as unofficial family doctor, there are hints that objectivity is not merely unattainable but ultimately undesirable. Asked to confirm that Giacinta is indeed 'un caso di patologia morale stranissimo assai' (p. 157), Follini replies, with habitual pomposity, 'Lo studio da un pezzo [...]. E' davvero un bel caso come diciamo noi.' The eavesdropping Mochi ironically rejoins: 'Le donne somigliano i vulcani [...]. Per intenderne qualche cosa bisogna fare [..] come quel filosofo dell'antichità, buttarcisi dentro.' (pp. 157-58). There is already the insinuation that Follini's error consists not in falling for Giacinta but in believing that passion can be understood dispassionately.

Follini proceeds to observe Giacinta from a barely discreet distance, relying exclusively on external, physiological observation. Given that her actions have hitherto been interpreted in purely moral and societal terms, we cannot readily see what Follini hopes to glean thereby. For all his 'philosophy', he appears to base his preliminary diagnosis squarely on 'i nervi'.

Giacinta is driven to confront Follini with the complaint that his relentless observation 'mi fa più male' (p. 162). As with *signor* Marulli, Follini's initial intervention proves not futile but detrimental. His bafflement at Giacinta's response highlights, moreover, the poverty of his practical understanding of the psyche. This is further underlined by his inability to comprehend that 'un uomo comune, quasi volgare' (p. 163) like Andrea Gerace can command Giacinta's affections. Follini's first interviews with Giacinta, who asks him to procure a drug to speed her death,

leaves the hitherto unflappable doctor 'confuso' and 'impensierito' (p. 162).

Follini finally grasps that Giacinta's suffering stems from the belated realization that Andrea is tiring of her. He is asked to prescribe a remedy. As he suggests first travel then sleeping pills, we observe that his positivist studies have remarkably few therapeutic implications. We are similarly struck by his medical impotence when, faced with Giacinta's moribund child, he merely recommends that 'bisognava affidarsi intieramente alla divina Natura medicatrice' (p. 168). There is also the suggestion that, had he not been busy taking notes on the nominally robust heroine, he might have perceived in time the symptoms of Adelina's pneumonia.[83]

As Giacinta enters her final emotional crisis, however, Capuana strives to persuade us that Follini's observations are trustworthy. He is a 'spirito saggio, equilibrato, che vedeva il fondo delle cose e non si lasciava illudere dalla superficie' (p. 171). What, then, has occurred to sharpen his perceptions? 'Al Follini era accaduto', we read, 'quel che accade a tutto coloro che scherzano col fuoco: si era scottato un pochino'. This narratorial comment must undermine readings which see in Follini either an exemplary dispassionate observer or an *unintentional* cipher for the limitations of positivism. Even critics who perceive consciously ironical characterization fail to acknowledge that Follini's infatuation with Giacinta does not obscure but heightens his comprehension of her suffering.

As his attachment to Giacinta grows, Follini moves from the impotent logging of 'i sintomi precursori di una catastrofe, oscura nelle sue conseguenze, ma infallibile e vicina' (p. 169) to the anticipation of 'un momento che la sua azione di amico non sarebbe stata, forse, inutile nello scioglimento del dramma a cui assisteva da spettatore' (p. 172). If, as a positivist, he can only trace the phases of a crisis, he is still capable, as a man, of empirical intervention. His profoundest failure is not his

emotional involvement with a patient but the abdication of his responsibility to provide human support.

The narrator unambiguously signals that an affair between Follini and Giacinta would represent 'un falso passo' (p. 172). The heroine's platonic affection is mere 'inopportuna e tardiva sentimentalità' (p. 188). After a particularly frank exchange in which Follini effectively confesses his love, he becomes conspicuously less assiduous. Yet as the novel reaches its conclusion, Capuana clearly indicates that, if we are to applaud Follini for his tactful retreat, then we must equally acknowledge that he betrays 'la sua parte di confidente' (p. 172).

After a lengthy absence, Follini pays Giacinta a visit on the morning of her suicide. Clearly a changed man, he begs charity for a moribund patient, reflecting that, for all his positivist principles, 'l'immediato contatto della realtà ci fa perdere ogni filosofia' (p. 199). This metamorphosis is emphatically traced to his attachment to Giacinta. Fearing that she has distracted him from his scientific mission, Giacinta suggests: 'Forse le ho fatto del male, senza volerlo.' (p. 200). Follini's reply is unequivocal: 'Mi ha fatto un gran bene!' It is his own subjective experience of human frailty, his own immersion in passion which enables Follini to empathize with his patients.

Empathy, however, cannot suffice. The doctor is 'in preda di uno di quei momenti di debolezza che decidono talvolta della sorte di un uomo' (p. 200), and, in this moment, makes an explicit declaration of love. In the claim that Giacinta has revealed 'un cielo dove la realtà si purifica, senza perdersi punto in un'idealtà fuori del mondo', he healthily acknowledges that Giacinta represents an active ideal, permitting him to work with greater insight and sympathy. He goes on, however, to suggest that he should have held his peace and savoured the 'profumo delle nostre anime che già, dopo questa confessione, mi sembra venuto un po' meno!'. Fortunately, he will shortly sail for America, where he may safeguard 'un sentimento che forse noi avremmo ucciso restando vicini'. If, as is implied, this moment represents a test of

Follini's character, he is found wanting. Rather than pursue the active ideal, he secludes himself with a hopeless passion, abandoning Giacinta to her fate.

One might certainly represent the Follini episode as a positivist parable underlining the vanity of a scientific approach to the mysteries of the psyche. Yet Follini is not simply a noble but ultimately comical figure forced to retire when out of his depth. He is condemned for a failure to assume his human responsibilities. Capuana signals that objectivity must finally be transcended, that understanding only comes from immersion in the stuff of life. Follini is led to question the distinction between observing self and external reality. He glimpses that consciousness ultimately has itself for object, that it seeks to comprehend its own creations. He begins to see that true knowledge possesses and transforms the known. Fleeing Giacinta, however, he fails to act upon this dawning awareness. Ultimately, he cannot fully renounce his positivist distance.

Shorn of emotional engagement, Follini's science is not only impotent but pernicious. He merely succeeds in providing Giacinta with the means to commit suicide.[84] One might detect in this episode a foretaste of the decadent critique of the deadening *esprit d'analyse*. Capuana already underlines the potential dangers of the aridly analytical positivist mind.

We might also perceive, in Capuana's condemnation of Follini, a defence of the 'commozione artistica' which recent critics feel render the novel's conclusion excessively melodramatic. Yet, if Giacinta's suicide is persistently linked with the collapse of a romantic ideal ('Il tuo amore non è più! Manca ogni scopo alla tua vita!' (p. 197)), and Capuana seeks crudely to marshal our responses through analogies with earlier literary tragic heroines,[85] Capuana does not altogether forsake scientific objectivity. As Giacinta nears suicide, he traces the visible symptoms of mental collapse with a rigour which, for once, justifies the label of physiologist habitually affixed to the Capuana of 1879.[86] Moreover, as Giacinta wistfully recalls her childhood as

a time of innocence, he has her evoke precisely those episodes -- her solitary, obsessive games with bric-à-brac -- which presage her present psychological crisis. A parallel is drawn between the neglected infant and the abandoned adult who, once again, studies trivial household objects 'quasi ella non avesse niente altro da pensare' (p. 196). Lest we fully accept Giacinta's contention that the death of love alone motivates her suicide, Capuana reminds us of the societal factors which set her on the path to self-destructive rebellion.

It has not been acknowledged that the setting for the novel's final scene -- Andrea's lodgings in the Besozzi household -- strongly re-emphasizes the influence of milieu on Giacinta's fate. Andrea's attachment to Elvira, his landlady's consumptive daughter, may initially appear a lamentable concession to the bourgeois melodrama. The subplot is, however, of vital ideological significance. The Besozzi represent a tranquil 'Middle Italy' endangered by the ruthless ascent of the Marullis. Amidst their homely affections, Andrea finally experiences 'un che di elevato, di poetico' (p. 177). Like the hero of Verga's *Eva* and other protagonists of the *Scapigliatura*, he belatedly appreciates traditional family values.

Post-Madrignani critics argue that Capuana habitually portrays pathological cases against a backdrop of reassuring normality. In the case of *Giacinta*, however, this is an oversimplified perspective. What is pathological here is the *immediate* milieu. Imperilled by an undisciplined thirst for profit and betterment, normality intrudes only sporadically through the kindly priest, the level-headed Marietta, and the modest Besozzi.[87] Elvira's consumption is not merely a melodramatic touch but a warning that the values which she represents are at risk.

Capuana's decision to situate the final confrontation between Andrea and Giacinta in the Besozzi household signifies an endorsement of values flaunted by the heroine's milieu. Indeed the novel's conclusion is blandly optimistic. Elvira is miraculously 'rinsanata' (p. 204) and a healthy family-based society salvaged

by the cathartic death of the scapegoat Giacinta. There are symbolic hints that the milieu which produces Giacinta is disintegrating. Following the deaths of Giacinta's father and daughter, her mother appears quietly to pass away, and her husband is plainly moribund. Although censured for a failure to break with Giacinta openly, Andrea is applauded for the decision to break a 'catena di mantenuto' (p. 203) and redeem himself with a life of honest toil. The novel ends, then, not with an unambiguously romantic *Liebestod* but with a reminder of the societal factors which push Giacinta towards self-immolation but which, Capuana signals, may be transcended by the resilient individual will and a reinvestment in traditional values.

* * * *

We must ask, in conclusion, how far *Giacinta* may be considered a naturalist novel. Formally, it largely adheres to models sanctioned by the moderately realist line of Italian narrative theorists associated with the *Rassegna settimanale* and *Rivista minima*. For these writers, *ex cathedra* analysis and balanced narratorial comment are not glaring contraventions of impersonality but, on the contrary, a guarantee of objectivity. Such models, we have seen, are not incompatible with early naturalist practice which permits the presence of a detached, zero-focalizing narrator. Our examination of Zola's critical writings shows that he lauds both Balzac's stance as 'docteur ès sciences sociales' and Flaubert's self-concealment. Far from dogmatically prescribing impersonality, he constantly seeks a foothold for the writer's subjectivity. The formal techniques of the 1879 *Giacinta* suggest, then, a cautious espousal of early naturalist models which must, in a European context, appear somewhat *passé*. Given the example of *L'Assommoir*, Capuana's minimal use of indirect free speech, rigid monologism, and epic manipulation of time must undermine the novel's pioneering status.

It is, however, in his exploration of the psyche that Capuana most conspicuously stops short of a naturalist treatment. Hereditary factors, the linchpin of the *Rougon-Macquart*, are progressively

downplayed in favour of societal factors. Yet, Capuana's analysis of a milieu redeemable solely through a return to traditional values and his belief in reform from the individual upwards are shared by the bulk of his Italian literary peers. A faith in the redemptive power of the will leads Capuana to signal that, despite mitigating factors, Giacinta is morally responsible for her own fate. Yet, in the attempt to persuade us of his heroine's liberty of action, he merely contradicts his own monologically presented exposition. Capuana has perhaps learned too much from the naturalists to be able to realize his own ideological ends. Milieu and moment combine all too convincingly to determine Giacinta's behaviour. The 'logic' of her revolt is more evident than Capuana desires.

The narrative's coherence is further undermined by a process of idealization whereby Giacinta increasingly resembles the virtuous heroine of the *romanzo rosa*. Yet societal factors are never altogether marginalized. Capuana seeks to balance 'commozione artistica' with an objective 'severità' which charts the complicity of milieu in Giacinta's self-destructive course. The heroine's demise is simultaneously a tragic finale, a healthy sacrifice which safeguards traditional values, and the logical outcome of an inherently suicidal revolt.[88]

*Giacinta* is not a bold attempt to transplant the naturalist novel into Italy, ultimately undermined by the persistence of a conservative ideology, but a cautious exploration of how far its more moderate innovations might be used to bolster an existing morally committed realist tradition. Thus hereditary factors with their corollary of rigid determinism are explicitly rejected while societal factors are not permitted to paralyse the individual will. In the portrayal of Giacinta, Capuana may fail to bring consciousness and milieu into convincing conflict and to reconcile contending ideologies. In the parable of Follini, however, he coherently argues that positivism must be tempered with Hegelian idealism. Capuana's authorial double comes to question the moral basis of objectivity and glimpses the necessity of personal engagement. If French and Italian models finally prove

incompatible, if the novel must be judged an unsuccessful experiment, we must nonetheless acknowledge that Capuana is more alive to ideological conflict and significantly more self-conscious as an artist than critical tradition has allowed.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1] The first edition is published by Brigola of Milan, the second and third by Giannotta of Catania.

[2] The most significant Croceian analyses of *Giacinta* are to be found in Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 110-11, Vetro, pp. 189-97, Marchese, pp. 76-87, and Traversa, pp. 34-43.

[3] See, in particular, Madrignani, pp. 154-81, Davies, pp. 46-60, and Storti Abate, pp. 72-87

[4] Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta*, in Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta ed altri racconti*, ed. by Geno Pampaloni (Florence: Vallecchi, 1972), pp. 27-259 (p. 29). This is a reprint of the 3rd edition of the novel.

[5] Ibid., p. 34.

[6] Letter of 2 January 1879 to Gianni Gianformaggi in Luigi Capuana, *Carteggio inedito*, ed. by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà (Catania: Giannotta, 1971), p. 88.

[7] Of recent critics, only Enrica Rossetti argues that Capuana's definition of impersonality remains essentially constant from the 1860s onwards (Enrica Rossetti, 'Capuana e l'impersonalità', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 2 (1981), 78-90).

[8] Luigi Capuana, 'F. Halm', in Luigi Capuana, *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo: saggi critici* (Palermo: Pedone Lauriel, 1872), p. 345 (first publ. in *La nazione*, 31 March 1865).

[9] Luigi Capuana, 'Rassegna drammatica', *La nazione*, 26 November 1866.

[10] Luigi Capuana, 'Giovanni Prati: *Armando*', in Luigi Capuana, *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie* (Milan: Brigola, 1880), pp. 93-118 (p. 97) (first publ. as '*Armando* di G. Prati', in *La nazione*, 20-21 July 1868).

[11] Luigi Capuana, '*A. Torelli: I mariti*', in *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*, p. 96 (first publ. in *La nazione*, 26 January 1868).

[12] Paolo Lioy, 'I romanzi contemporanei', *Il politecnico*, 72 (June 1862), 253-78 (pp. 259-60).

[13] Carlo Cattaneo, 'Sul romanzo delle donne contemporanee', in Carlo Cattaneo, *Scritti filosofici, letterari e vari* (Florence: Sansoni, 1957), p. 366 (first publ. in *Il politecnico*, 85 (July 1863), pp. 89-112).

[14] Luigi Capuana, 'Al lettore', in *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*, pp. i-xxxii. The most significant influence on this aspect of Capuana's thought is Angelo Camillo De Meis's *Dopo la laurea* (1868-69). See Madrignani, pp. 95-101.

[15] See, for instance, the preface to Salvatore Farina, *Capelli biondi* (Milan: Brigola, 1876) where Farina speaks of his efforts to realize his idea 'accettando i personaggi acconci a darle un po' d'evidenza, accettando le scene necessarie a far muovere i personaggi, accettando i colori indispensabili al vero'.

[16] See, in particular, Pasquale Villari, 'Emilio Zola e il suo romanzo sperimentale', *Rassegna settimanale*, 28 December 1879, and 'La pittura moderna in Italia e in Francia', *Nuova antologia*, 9 (1868)-10 (1869). For a fuller discussion of the aesthetic programmes of the *Rassegna settimanale* and *Rivista minima*, see Bigazzi, *I colori del vero*, pp. 222-67.

[17] Giorgio Arcoleo, *Letteratura contemporanea in Italia: appunti* (Naples: Perrotti, 1875), p. 238.

[18] Ibid., p. 44.

[19] Ibid., p. 45.

[20] Luigi Capuana, 'Luigi Gualdo', in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie*, pp. 175-86 (p. 178) (first publ. in *Il corriere della sera*, 3 June 1879).

[21] Luigi Capuana, 'Mario Rapisardi', in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie*, pp. 146-57 (p. 157) (first publ. in *Il corriere della sera*, 14-15 February 1877). The reviews of De Renzis and Sacchetti are published 4 February 1877 and 9 June

1879 (repr. as '*Un tipo comico*', and 'Roberto Sacchetti e Emanuele Navarro', in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie*, pp. 293-99 and pp. 187-94).

[22] Luigi Capuana, 'Emilio Zola', in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie*, pp. 50-76 (p. 55). This chapter contains reviews of Zola's *L'Assommoir* and *Une page d'amour* first published in *Il corriere della sera*, 10-11 March 1877 and 20 June 1878 respectively.

[23] Ibid., p. 51.

[24] Ibid., p. 64

[25] Ibid., p. 74.

[26] Francesco De Sanctis, 'Studio sopra Emilio Zola', in Francesco De Sanctis, *Saggi critici*, ed. by Luigi Russo, 3 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1954), III, 234-76 (p. 258) (first publ. in *Roma*, XVI (1878)).

[27] Ibid., p. 259.

[28] Ibid., p. 260.

[29] Capuana, 'Emilio Zola', cit., p. 64.

[30] Émile Zola, *Le Roman expérimental*, in Émile Zola, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1966-69), X (1968), 1176-1401 (pp. 1240-41).

[31] Ibid., p. 1201.

[32] Ibid., p. 1200.

[33] Émile Zola, 'Les poètes contemporains', in *Oeuvres complètes*, XII (1968), 371-89 (p. 382 and p. 381) (first publ. in *Le Messager de l'Europe*, February 1878). This essay is largely pre-empted by two articles both entitled 'Nos poètes', in *L'Événement illustré*, 20 April 1868, and *Le rappel*, 13 May 1870 (repr. in *Oeuvres complètes*, X, 741-44 and 930-34).

[34] Émile Zola, *Mes haines*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, X, 23-167 (p. 152 and p. 151).

[35] Émile Zola, 'Bibliographie', in *Oeuvres complètes*, X, 314-17 (p. 315) (first publ. in *L'Écho du Nord*, 19 July 1864).

[36] Émile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, 2nd edn, in *Oeuvres complètes*, I (1966), 519-667 (p. 519).

[37] Émile Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, XI (1968), 23-252 (pp. 98-99).

[38] Ibid., p. 74.

[39] Ibid., p. 56.

[40] Ibid., p. 106 and p. 97.

[41] Émile Zola, 'Alphonse Daudet', in *Oeuvres complètes*, XIV (1969), 656-62 (p. 657) (first publ. in *Le Figaro*, 13 September 1881).

[42] Almost as influential here as De Sanctis is Edmondo De Amicis's interview with Zola in Edmondo De Amicis, *Ricordi di Parigi* (Milan: Treves, 1879), pp. 213-90. Here De Amicis notes that 'non c'è forse altro romanziere moderno che si rimpiatti più abilmente di lui nelle opere proprie' (ibid., p. 222).

[43] I adopt Gérard Genette's definitions of internal, external, and zero focalization. Thus, an internally focalized narrative adopts a viewpoint within the narrated world. An externally focalized narrative observes the narrated world from a position of assumed ignorance. A zero-focalizing narrator displays greater knowledge of the narrated world than is possessed by its inhabitants. (See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Jonathan Culler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 189-94).

[44] Luigi Capuana, 'Edmond de Goncourt e Jean La Rue', in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie*, pp. 77-92 (p. 87) (first publ. in *Il corriere della sera*, 11 August 1879).

[45] Madrignani, p. 159.

[46] I follow Meir Sternberg's distinction between rhetorically motivated exposition, which functions on an extradiegetic level as an explicit exchange of information between narrator and narratee, and quasi-mimetically motivated exposition which

functions on an intradiegetic level in the form of dialogue. (See Meir Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 246-50).

[47] Davies, p. 56.

[48] Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, ed. by Marina Paglieri, introd. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1980), p. 6. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

[49] This phrase is quoted by Guido Davico Bonino, Introduction to Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, pp. V-XXV (p. VIII).

[50] See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 68-69. The *Rougon-Macquart* divide, in fact, neatly down the middle in their mode of *incipit*.

[51] If we note evidence of an intradiegetic perspective, the encirclement of the heroine and the shift from external focalization to psychonarration appear a good deal more gradual.

[52] Madrignani, p. 163 and pp. 167-68.

[53] Capuana, *Giacinta*, 3rd edn, cit., p. 34.

[54] See Capuana, 'L. Gualdo, ecc.', cit., p. 185.

[55] The stylistic influence of Zola is best exemplified by the following description of Ratti:

> E correndo al pianoforte vi si mise a fare un gran fracasso pestando all'impazzata sui tasti, lavorando in furia di pedale. I bassi fremevano, muggivano come dei tori feriti; le note acute e le medie stridevano con un arruffìo indiavolato. Pareva che una violenta grandine si scatenasse sulle corde e le facesse gemere, ondulare, strillare sotto la cattiva sorpresa dei suoi colpi. Le risa non finivano più. E l'avvocato stralunava gli occhi, agitava la testa come in preda al furore della ispirazione musicale, mostrava i denti, torceva il muso, pareva svenirsi dalla dolcezza, faceva mille versacci uno più brutto dell'altro. (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 10)

[56] See Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 26-33.

[57] Capuana, 'Edmond de Goncourt e Jean La Rue', cit., p. 90.

[58] Lest her husband prove so vile as to mention it and thus underline his generosity in marrying her.

[59] The parallels are well documented in Scalia, pp. 130-31.

[60] Madrignani, p. 159.

[61] See Vetro, p. 190, Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 11, Scalia, p. 129, and Marchese, p. 79.

[62] Put out to nurse in the countryside, the infant Giacinta is visited at first monthly, then every three or four months, and, finally, twice a year by her mother. A sickly child, her growth is stunted by the poor milk which she is offered, but her mother 'non se ne dava pensiero', addressing her daughter in a distant tone 'che non mostrava affatto si fosse trattato di una creaturina delle sue viscere' (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 16).

[63] Davies, pp. 53-54

[64] Beppe himself is portrayed in entirely naturalistic terms. Unbridled sensuality and a predisposition to violence are visible in his 'occhi pieni di malizia e di voglie animali che si tradivano pure nel taglio delle labbra e nella torosità del collo' (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 25). Giacinta's husband, the *conte* Grippa di San Celso, victim of inbreeding and hereditary syphilis, similarly conforms to a naturalist model. It is significant that only proletarian and aristocratic characters are resolved deterministically. It is implied that the rampant bourgeoisie may transcend its inheritance.

[65] 'E poiché anche l'assurdo ha la sua logica, questa s'imponeva alla Giacinta con la perfetta serietà della logica vera.' (ibid., p. 72).

[66] Madrignani, p. 165.

[67] 'In salotto la religione non era quasi mai la ben venuta. L'Andrea aveva più volte messo in canzone san Gennaro e il suo

miracolo e anche la Giacinta aveva riso.' (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p 81).

[68] Seeking to establish Giacinta's liberty of action, Capuana tempers his critique of society so far as to assert Giacinta was 'veduta assai bene' (ibid., p. 97) by her peers. Yet their malignity or, at best, inability to see beyond stigma, had previously been stressed by a zero-focalizing narrator.

[69] Particularly polemical is the treatment of the collapse of the *Banca Agricola Provinciale* where the narrator does not conceal his contempt for the 'farabutti' (ibid., p. 124) who ruin small investors.

[70] Enrico Ghidetti, 'Il destino di Giacinta', in Ghidetti, *L'ipotesi del realismo*, pp. 59-74 (pp. 71-74) (first publ. as Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1980), pp. I-XXXI).

[71] Her pity for her once-despised husband further placates a bourgeois readership.

[72] This is particularly evident in the pastoral interlude of Chapter 9.

[73] Who, we should recall, may also have borne the child of a lover.

[74] Capuana's excess of zeal here can be attributed to wariness of the reader's reactions as he prepares to risk one of the most scabrous episodes of the novel. First, Giacinta resorts to 'la piu schietta e bassa sensualità' (Capuana, *Giacinta secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 188) in an attempt to rekindle her lover's passion. Then, sick of the scruples which prevent her from abandoning Andrea and taking a new lover, she attends a masked ball with the intention of giving herself to the first comer.

[75] Davies, p. 58.

[76] Traversa, p. 86. See also Scalia, pp. 134-35.

[77] Madrignani, pp. 171-73.

[78] Bigazzi, *I colori del vero*, p. 42, and Annamaria Cavalli Pasini, *La scienza del romanzo: romanzo e cultura scientifica tra Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1982), p. 44.

[79] Davico Bonino, Introduction to Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, cit., p. XVII.

[80] Cavalli Pasini, pp. 40-41 and p. 46.

[81] Zangara, pp. 42-43, Ghidetti, 'Il destino di Giacinta', cit., pp. 72-73. Ghidetti appears less convinced than Zangara that parody is altogether intentional.

[82] Madrignani, p. 172. We note how little Follini resembles the dogmatic naturalist of Croceian tradition.

[83] Blinded by her 'victory' over destiny, Giacinta paradoxically proves as pernicious as her own mother. Wishing to have her daughter with her constantly, she provokes a fatal bout of pneumonia. Adelina's final agonies interrupt an ill-timed amorous bout between the provisionally reconciled Andrea and Giacinta, underlining the punitive nature of her demise.

[84] This is underlined in the final chapter where Follini's arrival immediately follows Giacinta's rediscovery of the curare prescribed for her father.

[85] There are conspicuous echoes of Lady Macbeth ('sentiva ancora appiccicato alle mani qualcosa di viscido che tutto il sapone del mondo non avrebbe potuto lavarle via' (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 196)) and Emma Bovary (the street organ playing a derisively cheery popular tune outside her window.

[86] With no assistance, let us note, from Follini.

[87] And, to a lesser extent, the 'decent' Follini.

[88] However melodramatic its realization, suicide is the logical -- perhaps too logical -- conclusion to the heroine's career. Whether through a tragically misplaced faith in romantic love or a futile revolt against society, Giacinta pursues a self-destructive path.

# CHAPTER II

## *Profumo*: An Image of Synthesis

### 1. *The Second 'Giacinta'*

A revised edition of *Giacinta* is published in 1886.[1] We must briefly examine this extensively reworked text in order to chart embryonic shifts in the focus of Capuana's analysis. We shall note, in particular, that ideology gradually supplants milieu as a determinant of individual behaviour and that the author increasingly delves the male rather than female psyche. This is the beginning of an artistic evolution which we shall follow in a short survey of Capuana's *novelle* of the 1880s, and which culminates in his second novel *Profumo* (1890).

Preparing the 1886 *Giacinta*, Capuana sought primarily to excise 'qualunque segno, qualunque ombra con cui la personalità dell'autore faceva qua e là capolino'.[2] Revision, however, goes far beyond the suppression of the first edition's most jarring narratorial interventions. The discovery of Verga's *La vita dei campi* and *I Malavoglia* leads Capuana to equate impersonality with internal focalization. We have suggested that, in common with both his Italian critical peers and Zola, the Capuana of 1879 views a discursive, extradiegetic narrator as the guarantor of objectivity. In the 1886 edition, however, he removes all passages of monologically presented description and analysis, and consistently adopts perspectives within the narrated world. The lesson of Verga is most conspicuous in the opening chapters where Giacinta's early childhood is now evoked as the collective memory of a narrating chorus. As the heroine reaches puberty, however, narrative is increasingly filtered through her awakening consciousness.

Our analysis of the formal failings of the first *Giacinta* surely indicates why Capuana should be particularly alive to the possibilities of internal focalization. There, a zero-focalized

narrative had proved incapable of accommodating two conflicting psychological and ideological models. Having first plotted the impact of societal determinants upon the individual, Capuana fails to persuade us that the heroine forges her own destiny. Internal focalization, conversely, permits him to portray the efforts of a consciousness to interpret, and, in interpreting, to create its own experience. Capuana does not, as Croceian critics assert, proceed from narrative theory to artistic realization. His concept of impersonality is developed as a response to formal difficulties encountered in narrative practice. In the first *Giacinta*, the narrator often appears to contradict himself. He insists that Giacinta exaggerates the determining influence of milieu. Her critique of society, however, is amply born out by a narratorially presented exposition. In the revised edition, milieu is evoked from within. No extradiegetic perspective explicitly corrects the partial constructions of Giacinta or, in earlier chapters, her peers.

Capuana, nonetheless, continues to signal that Giacinta misinterprets both self and society. He forsakes, however, the rhetorical interventions of the first edition for systematic allusions to impaired perception (clouded mirrors, fog-bound streets, blackouts, blind spots, tunnel vision). What milieu loses in socio-geographical precision, it gains in symbolic density.[3] If Giacinta's own observations are thus rendered suspect, how does Capuana suggest an alternative reading of her experiences?

Firstly, by eliminating the authoritative narratorial presentation of Giacinta's family and household, he renders it increasingly difficult to attribute her pathological behaviour to societal factors. In the 1879 edition, parental neglect and rape explicitly originate in a speculative milieu which feeds *signora* Marulli's egotism and Beppe's animal lust. In the second edition, conversely, the provincial banking world is barely evoked via Giacinta's uncertain perceptions, and the physiological studies of mother and rapist disappear. Consequently, although Giacinta continues to blame 'la società' for her sufferings, little permits the reader to link abuse to a wider social context and to interpret the behaviour of *signora* Marulli and Beppe according to non-ethical criteria. Instead of the

logical conclusion of a conditioned chain of events, rape resembles an isolated *fait accompli*. Giacinta appears the victim of circumstances rather than society. Capuana has been criticized for suppressing information vital to our understanding of Beppe and Giacinta's mother.[4] This is not simply, however, a corollary of Capuana's adoption of a limited, intradiegetic perspective. There is much in the 1886 *Giacinta* to suggest that Capuana consciously seeks to minimize the direct impact of milieu upon individual behaviour.

We have seen that, in the 1879 *Giacinta*, Capuana is already reluctant to allot a determining role to societal factors. Throughout the early 1880s, he displays a growing disquiet with the sociological bent of the French naturalist novel. His doubts may be traced to his encounter with Zola's *Le Roman expérimental* with its concept of the novel as 'de la sociologie pratique' and of novelists as 'des moralistes expérimentateurs' tackling 'tous les problèmes du socialisme'.[5] These are theories which Capuana judges 'molto discutibili'.[6]

In the revised *Giacinta*, it is not merely the disappearance of an objective, extradiegetic narrator which undermines the link between environment and individual. Even glimpsed through the heroine's perceptions, the milieu portrayed appears markedly less hostile. Cutting allusions to Giacinta's misfortune and scurrilous conjecture about her marriage are removed. There are far fewer references to the pervading corruption of the banking community. The precise social status of secondary characters is no longer specified, blunting the novel's polemical potential. There is even the implication that the revised edition depicts a rather less elevated social sphere.[7]

The more benign portrayal of milieu does not, however, extend to *signora* Marulli. Giacinta's mistreatment at her mother's hands is, on the contrary, intensified.[8] Set against a relatively innocuous backdrop, maternal cruelty now appears divorced from its immediate environment. Giacinta's perception of her mother as the instrument of society must therefore appear ill-founded. The

heroine rebels against a milieu whose implication in her sufferings is no longer evident.

In the revised text, Capuana not only makes it more apparent that Giacinta's critique of society is misconceived but also suggests more forcefully that other courses of action exist. In the first edition, it is hinted that the heroine should embrace the Christian resignation advocated by her confessor. Given, however, her exclusively secular milieu, we fail to see whence she might derive the requisite faith. In the 1886 *Giacinta*, her religious crisis is significantly reworked. No longer conditioned by the anticlerical banking community, she seeks to follow the priest's advice. Where, in 1879, she indignantly equates resignation with humiliation, she now genuinely attempts to counter abuse with spiritual resilience. Finding, however, that she cannot still her rebellious urges, she despairs at her own pusillanimity. It is with a sense of failure that she returns to plotting a revolt which she no longer perceives as her only choice.[9] In the first edition, conversely, she concludes that even God rejects her and that he wills her to self-destruction.[10]

If Giacinta still opts to rebel in the revised edition, her polemic against society -- 'una nemica così vile' in the first edition (1879, p. 133) -- is, nonetheless, greatly attenuated. Tirades lamenting the 'grande ingiustizia del mondo' (1879, p. 72) and 'il pregiudizio della società' (1879, p. 73) are excised. She loses much of her cynicism and self-assurance. Not even her relationship with Andrea affords the same 'coscienza di una rivolta compiuta, di una battaglia guadagnata' (1879, p. 120). She no longer flaunts their affair as 'una libera protesta del suo cuore' (1879, p. 120). In the 1886 *Giacinta*, the heroine seeks not so much to impose her own will on her milieu as to create an alternative reality for Andrea and herself. We have seen that, in the first edition, Giacinta's revolt gradually mellows into the pursuit of 'un mondo a parte, tutto suo' (1879, p. 133). In the revised text, this is clearly her ambition from the outset.

In both versions, efforts to maintain a hermetic idyll end in failure. In the second edition, however, the machinations of an envious milieu play a less significant role. It becomes, conversely, more evident that it is precisely the attempt to live outwith society which dooms the Giacinta/Andrea relationship. We have noted that Capuana is frequently criticized for isolating his protagonists from their milieu. In our discussion of the 1879 *Giacinta*, we argued that the isolation of the objectively marginalized Giacinta and Andrea is, in fact, determined by societal factors. In 1886, however, isolation is an ideological choice. Plotting an autonomous *vie à deux*, Giacinta consciously pursues a romantic ideal. Divorced from its milieu, however, passion proves to be self-consuming. Andrea, moreover, is ultimately incapable of renouncing societally generated ambition and the expectations of his family.

One might argue that Capuana thus merely resurrects a topos dear to the *scapigliati*. The revised *Giacinta* might well seem more coherent than its predecessor but thematically anachronistic. If there remains a cogent critique of positivism in the largely unmodified treatment of Follini, this episode now appears, at best, tangential to a conflict between ideal and real. What is significant in the revision process, however, is that the object of Capuana's critique moves further from milieu to ideology. In his following novels, he will no longer plot the direct impact of societal factors. Like the lovers in the second *Giacinta*, his protagonists will court isolation. They will find themselves incapable, however, of escaping the pull of contending ideologies and come to realize that their very quest for autonomy is the result of unresolved ideological conflict.

The shift in emphasis from milieu to ideology is not the only area in which the focus of Capuana's analysis begins to alter in the second *Giacinta*. In the radical and largely neglected revamping of Giacinta's lover, Andrea, there is evidence of a growing interest in charting neurosis in the male rather than female psyche.

In the first edition, Andrea cuts a shabby figure. The narrator persistently intervenes to underline his 'vigliaccheria', 'egoismo' (1879, p. 128), 'vanità' (1879, p. 121), and lack of 'elevatezza morale' (1879, p. 91). Instances of vulgarity and venality abound. He would, for example, be happy to have Giacinta as a mistress even before her marriage and, on hearing of her engagement, is piqued, above all, at the loss of her dowry. When he eventually becomes her lover, he can barely resist boasting of his 'buona ventura' (1879, p. 120). We are informed that his conscience is never once troubled by the thought that he is living off Giacinta's inheritance. When the desperate heroine resorts to open sexual provocation in an effort to rekindle his passion, her behaviour appeals to 'la volgare natura di quell'uomo' (1879, p. 188).

The mere absence of moralistic commentary in the revised *Giacinta* greatly contributes, in itself, to a more sympathetic portrayal of Andrea. There are, however, more concrete grounds for considering him a reformed character. The examples of improbity cited above are not passed over in silence but explicitly contradicted. There is no hint of venality and far greater stress on frustrated passion in the episodes leading up to Giacinta's marriage. He has sufficient moral integrity to accuse *himself* of weakness and cowardice, however incapable he may prove of acting upon his analysis. It is significant that, when asked by Follini to explain her infatuation with 'un uomo comune, quasi volgare' (1879, p. 163; 1886, p. 242), in the first edition, Giacinta replies, 'Il maggior predominio dell'Andrea sul mio cuore proviene [...] dalla sua debolezza' (1879, p. 163). In the second, this becomes 'da quella sua mitezza di carattere, da quella sua bontà che gli altri, forse, chiamerebbero debolezza' (1886, p. 243). Andrea's weakness is no longer a deficiency of moral sensibility but a lucid inability to act.

To an extent, changes in Andrea's character may be seen as a corollary to the formal innovations of the second *Giacinta*. His heightened self-awareness may largely result from Capuana's renunciation of any means by which motivation might otherwise be conveyed. In an internally focalized text, Andrea acquires,

moreover, a modified narrative function. Until the intervention of Follini in the latter part of the novel, he supplies the only consistent external view of Giacinta, the only counterbalance to the heroine's self-image. As he restyles Andrea as a narrative filter, Capuana is obliged to create a more reflective, sympathetic, and, ultimately, reliable figure. As he fluctuates between bafflement, fascination, and alarm, Andrea becomes something of a reader surrogate.

One might equally interpret the remodelling of Andrea as a response to those critics of the first *Giacinta* who, with some justification, queried the credibility of the heroine's passion for an unprincipled mediocrity.[11] What Capuana ultimately portrays, however, in the reworked Andrea is a suspension of the will, which recalls those studies of male abulia that dominate the naturalist and *psychologiste* novel following the publication of Ribot's *Les Maladies de la volonté* (1883). One thinks, in particular, of Zola's *La Joie de vivre*, Daudet's *Sapho* (both 1884), and the early novels of Paul Bourget. If, in the modified figure of its heroine, the 1886 *Giacinta* offers a dated critique of romantic idealism, Capuana's refashioning of Andrea shows that he remains alive to a changing cultural and ideological context.[12]

In conclusion, then, Capuana's revision of his first novel shows a growing reluctance to link individual behaviour to an immediate milieu, a greater appreciation, conversely, of the impact of ideology, and an increased focus on the male rather than female psyche. This is an evolution which continues in *Le appassionate*, those *novelle* with a bourgeois, generally non-Sicilian setting, written, for the most part, between the 1879 *Giacinta* and *Profumo*.[13] A short survey of these tales will reveal how Capuana begins to trace the roots of male neurosis to ideological factors. We shall note, in particular, an expansion of the first *Giacinta*'s critique of positivism. In this, and in Capuana's exploitation of an allegorical backdrop, they lay the groundwork for *Profumo*.

## .2. *'Le appassionate'*

The tales of *Le appassionate* may cumulatively invoke a shared institutional reality,[14] but are nonetheless remarkable for Capuana's flouting of the naturalist trinity of race, milieu, and moment. Recent critics have largely attributed his neglect of societal and environmental data to a growing discomfort with the overtly ideological ends of French naturalism. They argue that Capuana aspires to an ideologically neutral positivism which isolates and charts objective *processes*. The absence of environmental indicators in these tales would thus be consistent with a desire to conduct *in vitro* experiments.[15] It might also, these critics suggest, reflect Capuana's conviction that 'la civiltà, questa inesorabile livellatrice' has created a pan-European bourgeoisie which renders setting indifferent.[16] They note Capuana's remark that the life of the Italian middle-classes is 'cosí calcata su la francese che non mostra una caratteristica spiccata né esteriore, né interiore'.[17] This analysis goes some way to explaining the socio-geographical imprecision of *Le appassionate*, but overlooks how far the protagonists of these tales actively seek isolation. As in the 1886 *Giacinta*, voluntary exile itself acts upon the psyche. Pathological processes do not evolve against a neutral backdrop but are determined by the attempt to escape both milieu and the pull of temporality.

The protagonists of *Le appassionate* are, like the lovers in the 1886 *Giacinta*, united in their quest for a hermetic retreat. This may take the relatively banal shape of the *villeggiatura* of 'Precocità' (1885), the dandyish bachelor's den of 'Contrasto' (1881), or the marital 'nido civettuolo' of 'Adorata' (1884).[18] Elsewhere, however, it assumes an explicitly allegorical character. 'Storia fosca' (1880) and 'Evoluzione' (1883) recognizably unfold within an earthly paradise where, in the first case, recurrent allusions to forbidden fruit signal imminent banishment,[19] and, in the second, a beckoning 'nero abisso' presages a plunge into neurosis.[20] The retreat invariably proves fertile ground for the irrational, for pathological crises sparked by the incursion of the past. The protagonists are visited by personal ghosts; memory is gradually superimposed upon the present.

The most paradigmatic piece is 'Gelosia' (1883) where 'un'oasi d'amore', seemingly 'a mille miglia da ogni centro di vita', is devastated by a case of 'gelosia retrospettiva'.[21] The heroine insistently invites her lover to draw comparisons between herself and an old flame whose portrait she finds amongst his belongings. This, however, merely revives his former passion. Through the portrait, the ex-mistress becomes a tangible presence. In this and many of the later *appassionate*, the secluded milieu is transformed into a magic circle to be broken solely by the exorcism of ghosts. The heroine's 'rival' is only expelled by the ritualistic destruction of the portrait in a fabulous grotto.

Other striking instances of the transformation of idyllic retreat into magic circle occur in 'Adorata', where the 'nido civettuolo' becomes 'una prigione' where 'si perde nello spazio',[22] and in 'Anime in pena' (1883), where the child-bride Cristina believes herself imprisoned in an enchanted lair by her aging husband Lupi.[23] After 'Gelosia', the most conspicuous example of the vengeful incursion of the past is provided by 'Contrasto' where the attempts of the dandyish hero to furnish a love-nest for his latest conquest are frustrated by the evocation of an ex-lover who acquires in memory 'una vita quasi piú reale di quella vissuta una volta'.[24]

In *Le appassionate*, neurosis is triggered not by the immediately oppressive environment of naturalism but by the pressure exerted upon the subconscious by a personal and social background which the protagonists actively seek to evade. Milieu, then, comes to function on the temporal plane. One might, once again, feel that Capuana is merely resurrecting themes exploited by the *Scapigliatura.* Shared topoi include the irresolvable conflict of real and ideal,[25] and the inevitable pollution of the idyll through the vindictive incursions of society and through the dissolution of the isolated psyche. In other respects, however, these pieces mirror contemporary studies of the disintegration of the masculine will and look forward to decadentism. It has not been observed that Capuana increasingly abjures the studies of

feminine psychopathology favoured in *Profili di donne*, *Giacinta* and such *appassionate* as 'Ribrezzo' (1884) and 'Tortura' (1889) for a dissection of male neurosis.[26] We meet numerous counterparts of the abulic, lucidly inept Andrea of the revised *Giacinta* while the male aspiration to positivistic objectivity, already satirized in Follini, is insistently debunked.

There is already evidence of this transition in one of the earliest of *Le appassionate*, 'Povero dottore!' (1882), in which a consumptive wife seeks to infect her doctor-husband, Lorenzo. Anna Storti Abate summarizes recent critical opinion in judging this a study of feminine psychopathology 'seguito con l'occhio clinico del marito dottore',[27] and in arguing that the doctor's final breakdown implies a profoundly pessimistic analysis of the impact of the irrational on the solidest scientific mind.[28] Yet, from the very outset, Lorenzo displays symptoms of neurosis. The suspicion that his bride's vivacity hides 'un carattere un po' cattivo, un po' viziato' and his reiterated horror of her forwardness reveal not a scrupulous recorder of psychopathological symptoms but an emotionally immature male fearful of feminine sexuality.[29] (He is an eternal student still dwelling with his parents in early middle-age and loth to abandon his solitary bachelor existence.) Positivist science merely reinforces his dualistic distrust of the flesh and provides him with a language which dignifies his neurosis. As with Follini, it appears to have few therapeutic implications. Lorenzo lucidly charts his wife's decay but is powerless to arrest it. This is more, however, than a study in positivist impotence. In his association of sexuality and pathology, Lorenzo displays an embryonic decadent sensibility. The pleasurable guilt which he derives from exhausting the moribund Concettina with his embraces pre-empts the Tullio Hermil of D'Annunzio's *L'innocente*. 'Povero dottore!' does not signal that even a model positivist may succumb to the irrational but that the bourgeois male is as prone to neurosis as his female counterpart.

In 'Mostruosità' (1881), the suggestion that positivist analysis may itself be a function of neurosis is even more pronounced. The

tale is focalized through its male protagonist, Giovanni, who scrupulously charts the sadistic, promiscuous behaviour of his wife. Again, however, he is no reliable, objective observer. He shares Lorenzo's sexual passivity and obsessive mother-love ('era sempre il suo bimbo quell'uomo di trentacinque anni'[30]). His positivistic diagnoses of his wife's behaviour -- 'la perversione dell'organismo la spinge a rotolarsi nel fango', 'è una malattia come le altre' -- are openly deemed self-delusion by an atypically incursive narrator.[31] The rival diagnoses of *nostalgie de la boue* and demonic possession proposed by Giovanni's parents are both presented more indulgently. There is a suggestion that, like the heroes of Bourget's early novels, his judgment is clouded and his will undermined by an over-developed *esprit d'analyse*. Like 'Gelosia', this tale ends on a strikingly predecadent note. Having brutally reconquered Virginia, Giovanni is overwhelmed with sexual disgust and seeks the consolations of art in the contemplation of her portrait.[32]

We might see in figures like Lorenzo and Giovanni a fusion of the Follini of the 1879 *Giacinta* and the Andrea of the revised text. Positivist science now not only renders the male subject lucidly impotent but reinforces a dualistic division of mind and body which paralyses the will and fosters sexual neurosis. There are further instances of subjugation to feminine sexuality in 'Adorata', where Enrico's devotion to the Sphinx-like Cristina leads to an abdication of the will, and in 'Storia fosca', where an effeminate adolescent is seduced by his stepmother. In the later *appassionate*, Capuana's men begin to take a decadent pleasure in observing and refining their neuroses and in turning their analytical powers to the creation of artificial psychological states. The protagonist of 'Evoluzione' dispassionately charts the irrational twists of his passions, while the sensualist-hero of 'Il piccolo archivio' (1885) insists that 'il naturale, la spontanea, il primitivo non ci basta più' in these 'lumi di luna di raffinatezza nevrotica'.[33]

The post-naturalist themes which emerge in *Le appassionate* are, however, most fully explored in 'Il muletto del dottore'

(1890), the least typical of the Sicilian tales compiled in *Le paesane* (1894). This *novella*, which pre-empts *Profumo* in its ironic juxtaposition of bourgeois neurosis and earthy rural setting, begins as a farcical sketch concerning the intelligence of a mule which opportunely brays whenever his garrulous master over-extends his medical visits. The register brusquely changes, however, as the country doctor is called to attend two outsiders, 'due personaggi mezzo fantastici, piovuti là non si sapeva né perché né da dove' who live secluded in a darkened *palazzo*.[34] We re-encounter, then, the cult of the retreat familiar from so many of *Le appassionate*. Confronted with a young woman apparently in a coma, the doctor is forced to acknowledge that here 'la scienza è impotente'.[35] Virtually imprisoned by her armed and near-suicidal lover, his impotence is underlined by the mule's futile braying. Strikingly, the narrator provides no medical rationale for the woman's condition beyond an unspecified 'cattiva notizia'.[36] The absence of all background detail precludes any hypothesis on the reader's part. The patient is an impenetrable given who recovers solely through a conscious 'sforzo', an effort of the will.[37] Utterly paralysed but quite conscious, she is moved to pity by the terrified doctor, and the spell is broken. This tale reveals, then, a profound scepticism concerning the penetrative powers of positivism and a rejection of naturalist determinism in favour of the will.[38]

We shall re-encounter in *Profumo* many of the themes of Capuana's *novelle* of the 1880s: the dissolution of an idyll against a symbolic backdrop; the transition from female to male neurosis; a developing critique of positivist science; the transcendence of determinism. Capuana's second novel is not the beginning of an anti-naturalist 'involuzione', as post-Madrignani criticism has argued, but the culmination of a discourse on positivism initiated in the Follini episode of *Giacinta* and pursued throughout *Le appassionate*. A failure to acknowledge that Capuana increasingly adopts a playfully critical approach to positivism and to its literary manifestations has led the majority of critics to view *Profumo* as an incoherent hybrid of naturalistic observation and *fin de siècle* spirituality, the work of a writer who has outlived his

historic 'function'. As we now briefly survey the novel's critical history, we shall find that commentators have persistently failed to construct a narrative model which fuses embryonic idealism with perceived vestiges of positivism. For most, one or the other is a gratuitous encumbrance.

### 3. *Critical Approaches to 'Profumo'*

Most Croceian critics of *Profumo* are glad to detect a partial rejection of rigid *zolismo* for the neo-idealism of Bourget and Fogazzaro. Many of these, however, concur with Croce's assertion (1905) that *Profumo* is ultimately marred by an anachronistic and dilettantish taste for 'le curiosità scientifiche'.[39] The physiological quirk by which, in moments of crisis, Eugenia emits the scent of orange-blossom is deemed both non-poetical and non-functional. For these critics, Capuana cannot quite transcend the 'studio del caso patologico e anormale' of naturalism.[40] For some Croceians, however, a deadweight of physiological data is redeemed by the vivid documentation of Sicilian rites, customs, and beliefs. In their view, Capuana forsakes the 'solite volgarità' of French naturalism for 'la ricerca di motivi piú salubri, piú consoni alla nostra tradizione letteraria'.[41]

The Croceian consensus is overturned by Madrignani (1970) who nonetheless concurs that Eugenia's physiological symptoms are a throwback to a mechanistic psychological model at odds with the proto-Freudian exploration of the relationship between Patrizio and his mother. Yet, for Madrignani, it is not the 'profumo' of the title which undermines the novel's unity but the neo-idealism lauded by earlier critics. He argues that *Profumo* is vitiated by Capuana's eagerness to engineer an optimistic conclusion and to rehabilitate the will. In his analysis, the reconciliation between Eugenia and Patrizio depends solely on the intervention of the sagacious Dr Mola. As such, it gratuitously curtails a scrupulously observed process of estrangement and defies the logic of Patrizio's 'case'. Madrignani judges the hitherto admired rural backdrop to be an equally regrettable sign of incipient idealism. Colourful

peasant-caricatures, viewed with the detachment of the continentalized expatriate, alleviate psychological tension, add an idyllic touch, and dissolve psychological drama within a comforting context of normality.[42]

Madrignani's views inform the recent monographs by Storti Abate (1989), Cappello (1994), and Davies (1979).[43] While echoing Madrignani's censure of a contrived, idealistic conclusion and of a consoling rural setting, Davies, however, acknowledges that the 'sfondo' is not always portrayed in a naturalistic manner. She detects cautious use of the pathetic fallacy as nature is entrusted with tragic intimations. She nonetheless largely regards the Sicilian backdrop as the passive reflector of the protagonists' neuroses. We shall see, conversely, that landscape possesses allegorical significance only belatedly grasped by the protagonists, and that the villagers of Marzallo actively conspire to flush the newcomers from ascetic isolation.

Davies may be influenced by a hitherto marginalized critical line which downplays the psychopathological aspects of *Profumo* in favour of a cautiously figurative reading. Scalia (1952) suggests that the scent of orange-blossom is not a scientific curiosity but an essentially symbolic 'fragrant protest' from Eugenia's neglected body.[44] Traversa (1968) stresses the non-naturalistic character of much of the novel's backdrop. While observing that the deserted monastery in which Patrizio dwells is a cipher for his unhealthy asceticism, he nonetheless overlooks the religious symbolism inherent in its abandoned garden and adjacent abyss, judging these solely marvellous and sinister. Like Davies, he allots the 'paesaggio' a merely passive role as a *tabula rasa* onto which trauma is projected. The characters which populate this landscape simply provide, as for Madrignani, local colour.[45] Edoardo Villa (1974) is alone in detecting a nascent decadent sensibility in the presence of 'qualche figura simbolica'.[46] He neglects, however, to cite examples and dismisses two obvious candidates, the sacristan/gardener Padreterno and the deranged Pina, as 'macchiette' in dubious taste. Villa ultimately concurs with Madrignani in seeing the backdrop as a means of alleviating

tension but alludes to unspecified 'corrispondenze suggestive' with the novel's foreground.[47] Dramatically ironic correspondences they remain, however, as milieu fails to impinge on the isolated protagonists.

The sole attempt to date, to integrate background and foreground and to bring primary and secondary characters into a dynamic continuum, is made by Paola Azzolini (1984). She observes that Mola is portrayed as the 'mago buono' of Capuana's *fiabe*.[48] In her analysis, the doctor gradually initiates Patrizio and Eugenia into the rites of nature, abetted by a caste of equally fabulous characters that embody nature in all its robust carnality and irreducible mystery. For Azzolini, moreover, the religious ceremonies which punctuate the novel are not mere ethnological documentation. The pivotal procession of the flagellants is an image of Eugenia's repressed sexuality. There is a persistent conjunction of 'religiosità, sadismo e morte' which exposes 'la dinamica sepolta del desiderio'.[49] Azzolini seeks not only to establish the functionality of milieu and minor characters but to rehabilitate the novel's conclusion, arguing that the intervention of the doctor/confessor pre-empts Freud's 'terapia della parola'.[50]

In my reading of *Profumo*, I shall argue that religious imagery is as much a function of Patrizio's as Eugenia's neurosis and that it saturates an allegorical backdrop which serves as more than an embodiment of an ultimately benevolent nature. I shall nonetheless take my lead from Azzolini's suggestive reading in an attempt to show how an essentially symbolic 'sfondo' interacts dynamically with the novel's foreground to prepare us for a coherent and carefully prefigured resolution. It does this neither by supplying a reassuring context of normality nor by punctually diffusing the central drama but by warning us that Patrizio and Eugenia suffer primarily from a spiritual crisis. In our study of *Profumo*, we shall see that Marzallo and its inhabitants dramatize the choices open to the protagonists. Far from providing comic relief, the villagers constitute ideological guides or doubles, directing Patrizio and Eugenia away from the extremes of materialism and religious idealism towards a reconciliation with

the body and a reunification of the self. The charting of a spiritual crisis does not, however, mean that Capuana is engaged in a neo-idealist retreat from history. We shall find that the repressive ideologies which create neurosis in the protagonists are insistently linked both to the post-*Risorgimento* secular state and to the Church which it has supplanted.

## 4. *'Profumo'*

For the purposes of our study, the essentially allegorical narrative of *Profumo* may be divided into six sequences.[51] Chapters 1-3 chart the growing tensions between Eugenia, Patrizio, and Patrizio's mother, Geltrude, following their arrival in Marzallo, and relate these to a conflict between the forces of positivism, asceticism, and untrammelled nature. This sequence concludes with the laying bare of the rivalry between mother and daughter-in-law, and the appearance of the first symptoms of Eugenia's physiological condition. Chapters 4-8 see the first attempts of the citizens of Marzallo to urge the reclusive newcomers towards a reconciliation with nature. They enjoy partial success with Patrizio, but Eugenia retreats into asceticism. Geltrude's death sparks, in Chapters 9-11, Eugenia's liberation from the repressive strictures of both Church and science. Patrizio's learning process is, however, suspended as he reverts to guilty isolation. In Chapters 12-14 Eugenia first enters communion with nature and breaks the couple's seclusion. In Chapters 15-17 she arrives at a healthy acceptance of her sexual instincts but is tempted by the arch-positivist Ruggiero. There are signs, meanwhile, that Patrizio has re-embarked upon a parallel process of liberation. Chapters 18-23 see Patrizio's final reconciliation with nature and reconquest of Eugenia under the moral guidance of Dr Mola.

### a) *Chapters 1-3*

*Profumo* begins with a description of the tortuous ascent to Marzallo where Patrizio is to work as a tax-collector. Recent critics

have followed Madrignani in observing that the portrayal of the three reluctant fellow travellers trapped within the cab immediately lays bare the novel's psychological nub: the sexual prohibition imposed on Patrizio by his mother. Gertrude and her detested daughter-in-law face each other in resentful silence while 'il pudore della sua casta giovinezza e il pensiero che gli occhi severamente socchiusi della madre stèssero lì a sorvegliarlo' prevent Patrizio from comforting his travel-sick spouse.[52] It has not, however, been noted that the landscape which Patrizio glimpses through the carriage windows is equally revealing.

Emerging from a fog-bound plain, the lineaments of which are 'fantasticamente sfumati' (p. 335), Patrizio is presented with an intermittent vision of a hill-top town apparently suspended in the clouds, its houses 'affacciate proprio all'orlo del precipizio e quasi minaccianti di buttarsi giù' (p. 336). Critics who observe the resemblance between Marzallo and Ispica where Capuana spent childhood holidays overlook how the novel's setting is immediately presented as a cipher for Patrizio's dangerous idealism.[53] His blurred vision of the plains signals a scornful ignorance of a prosaic reality to which he will eventually be reconciled. The abyss is a double-sided symbol. For Patrizio, it is a measure of moral distance from sordid valley-life. The reader, however, will gradually be directed to recognize an image of the mutual incomprehension and progressive estrangement which undermines his marriage and which is transcended only by the leap of faith on which the novel ends.

There is a further, equally transparent, allegorical dimension to the arrival in Marzallo. This spiralling ascent of a hill topped by an abandoned paradisiacal garden and perched precariously above an abyss must immediately recall *Purgatorio*. This is not merely an ironic presage of Patrizio's quest for purity and self-torturing asceticism but a warning that *Profumo* is to be a spiritual drama resolved by a freeing of the will and the attainment of sovereignty over oneself. This opening sequence suggests, then, not an inexorable psychopathological process unfolding against a *verista* backdrop but a tortuous path to self-

conquest. That the highly conventional symbolism employed in these pages should be persistently neglected is a mark of the critical intransigence with which Capuana is viewed as a documentary naturalist.

The journey's end demands that we situate Patrizio's psychosexual drama within a wider spiritual crisis. He takes up residence in an abandoned monastery commandeered by the fiscal authorities. The apparent triumph of secular materialism is underlined by the allegorical figure of the gardener Padreterno, the monastery's former sacristan. Villa speaks for many in deeming Padreterno a caricatural rustic portrayed 'in chiave macchiettistica'.[54] For Davies, he is 'slightly comical', even 'reassuring'.[55] Yet this derided, white-bearded old man, abandoned in an overgrown garden ('Essere Padreterno e fare il sagrestano per campare la vita. Così va il mondo!' (p. 479)), is as crassly allegorical as his name suggests. His continued presence suggests, however, that the triumphalism of the secular state may be misplaced. The ease, moreover, with which monastery becomes tax-office signals that it has inherited much of the repressive puritanism of the former tenants.

Patrizio, representative of the secular state, shares with the protagonists of *Le appassionate* a quest for an extra-temporal retreat. 'Rifatto stabilmente il lor nido', he considers, 'avrebbero ripreso a vivere a parte; felici di volersi bene, senza disperdere fuori di casa, in mezzo a chi non aveva nulla di comune con loro, le giovani forze del cuore' (p. 337). In Marzallo, they will finally exorcize a past which makes the present seem a 'deliziosissimo sogno' (p. 338).

Inevitably, the idyll rapidly falls prey to ghosts. The newly-weds feel that 'qualcosa della vita monastica fosse rimasta appiccata alle pareti' (p. 339). The monastic atmosphere reawakens the asceticism imbued in Patrizio through a severely chaste upbringing. Thus, even out of sight of his prying mother, Patrizio rebuffs Eugenia's most innocent advances.[56]

There is evidence too that the idyll is threatened by the persistence of a more distant past. Patrizio is haunted by the peasants of Marzallo, 'strane figure' (p. 337) inhabiting prehistoric 'grotte trogloditiche'. The secular world of the tax-office proves vulnerable both to religious asceticism and to primal impulses. The pull of the primitive is demonstrated as Patrizio superstitiously seeks to ward off the evil destiny which threatens his 'nido'. The ritualistic destruction of an heirloom is designed as 'qualche sacrifizio a modo degli antichi' (p. 346).

Capuana has already explored the co-existence of different layers of human experience in his verse collection *Semiritmi* (1888). In the most ambitious piece, 'Intus', he despairs of dominating 'questo tumultuante | oceano nascosto nel profondo mio essere' where 'tutto il passato, la storia tutta' exists contemporaneously. Prehistoric 'istinti di preda' are tempered by a Hellenic 'religione | della divina forma'. This, in turn, succumbs to the 'alta follia della penitenza' of medieval Christianity, which is then tamed by the reign of reason. Yet as the limitations of scientific knowledge become evident, the poet is tempted by 'la carità perdonante del Cristo' and left 'brancolante, cieco | credulo e insieme riluttante'.[57] Patrizio inhabits an identical spiritual world. Seeking to slough off a debased present, Patrizio enters a sphere where the pagan, the Christian, and the secular humanist vie for his soul.

Reassured by the 'sacrifice', which he self-mockingly terms an 'atto da credula femminuccia' (p. 347), Patrizio has sufficient confidence in his 'vita nuova' to review his harsh childhood with 'altera compiacenza' (p. 351), as if to say to the past: 'Vedi? Alla fine ti ho vinto!' The reader of *Le appassionate* senses that he thus risks invoking the very ghosts which he claims to have exorcized.

He first recalls his father's death which brings about the ruin of his debt-crippled family. Yet so fragmented, so divorced from any socio-geographical context are Patrizio's recollections that they again demand to be read in an allegorical key. Patrizio's remembers being awoken as a child and informed that 'si va dalla

mamma' (p. 348). A winding road, cut between 'scoscendimenti di terreno' and bordering a precipice, irresistibly evokes *Inferno* and recalls the earlier allusions to *Purgatorio*. Again we are directed to view *Profumo* as a process of spiritual self-conquest.

At the pit of a valley, Patrizio is led to his father's corpse.[58] Here Geltrude claims him with the cry 'Figliuolino mio! Orfanello mio!' (p. 349). This is a journey to an Underworld explicitly identified as the realm of Geltrude who shall be persistently characterized as a shade, as a bride of death. Deprived of a paternal counter-balance, Patrizio's psyche is moulded by a mother whose sexual prohibition is symptomatic of a wider denial of life. Increasingly, the ghostly but omnipresent Geltrude comes to personify the vestiges of an ascetic past which attach to the monastery.

There is a further literary-allegorical dimension to this passage. If the descent recalls *Inferno*, the subterranean encounter with a dead father evokes Book VI of the *Aeneid*. This should alert us to the significance of Patrizio's itinerant professional life. Eugenia's parents observe: 'Andrai di qua e di là, senza casa propria, senza parenti né amici di cui tu possa fidarti!' (p. 458). Patrizio deals with clients who 'non si raccapezzavano facilmente nel gran viluppo delle leggi antiche e nuove' (p. 453). Following the collapse of an old order, Patrizio, like Aeneas, wanders in search of new law, of a promised new settlement.[59]

If these memories highlight the vulnerability of the 'vita nuova' to asceticism, Patrizio's recollection of his quasi-erotic childhood passion for Giulietta is more urgently premonitory. He tells Eugenia of his mother's hostility to his friend and of her open satisfaction when she falls to her death from a window. Eugenia alone had inspired a similar sentiment during a silent courtship, he recalls, essentially conducted from opposite windows. There is a clear indication, then, that his wife runs a similar risk to Giulietta.

The void between the windows equally clearly prefigures the abyss which underlies the monastery. The warning is lost on

Patrizio who happily concludes: 'Ora Giulietta sei tu!' (p. 357). His wife's blunt riposte, 'No, io sono Eugenia', reveals, conversely, her fear that Giulietta's tragedy may form a blueprint for their relationship. She senses that Geltrude's hostility may lead the newly-weds to plunge into a chasm of non-communication. Giulietta, then, is the first of the novel's doubles, highlighting the danger of an ascetic maternal influence. Geltrude underlines the moral of the tale at this point by silently intruding upon the couple 'simile a un fantasma'. The analogy thus stresses both Underworld associations and the possibility of the past repeating itself.

Latent animosity between mother and daughter-in-law breaks into the open in Chapter 3. Patrizio is finally forced to acknowledge Geltrude's prying jealousy and note parallels with the Giulietta episode. Like the protagonists of 'Povero dottore!' and 'Gelosia', however, he cannot contemplate opposing his mother's will and seeks to persuade Eugenia that her fears are unfounded. Aware of a breach forced between husband and wife, Eugenia succumbs to an epileptic fit which bears, however, few of the hallmarks of the naturalist case-study.

Portrayed in terms which explicitly evoke orgasm, the attack is clearly marked as an instinctive protest against Patrizio's maternally inspired denial of her sexual nature. Her husband is appalled by the dissolution of the 'fanciullesco' (p. 367) and 'verginale' which forms Eugenia's charm. At its height, she seizes him crying, 'Mi appartieni... sei mio!' (p. 368), an echo and refutation of Geltrude's claiming of Patrizio at his father's deathbed. A struggle is thus instigated between religious asceticism, instinctive sexuality, and the secular positivism which Patrizio falteringly represents.

Initial victory appears to belong to Geltrude as her son glimpses debased nature in the hitherto idealized Eugenia. She oversteps the mark, however, with the callous put-down 'Lo vedi? E un'isterica!'. Sharply reminded of her pleasure in Giulietta's death, Patrizio is briefly stung to 'sdegno'. There are already, indications,

then, that Patrizio may withstand his mother's influence. The couple's final reconciliation is far from unheralded.

The importune visit of Marzallo's effusive Mayor, shortly before Eugenia's collapse, provides a further pointer to a liberating resolution. He is no mere regional stereotype introduced to alleviate psychological tension and suggest a reassuring wider context. In a drama which concludes with a long-delayed cathartic speech-act, the Mayor's maddening garrulity functions as a spur. His incessant jumping from one topic to another provides a healthy contrast to the solipsistic obsessions of Patrizio, Eugenia, and Geltrude. His visit represents the first attempt by the Marzallesi to break the newcomers' seclusion and supply a counter-pull to Geltrude's life-denying asceticism.

The Mayor teases Patrizio about his hermetic lifestyle and humorously seeks to conquer his implied disdain for Marzallo with a portrait of his charges. This is no pretext permitting Capuana to exploit his own administrative experience and expound his brand of *Realpolitik*. The Mayor's contention that Church and state have both overtaxed the local populace and his pragmatic readiness to waive petty regulations may be read as an indication that Catholics and positivists alike penalize the natural. Patrizio is tacitly urged to abandon his ascetic ideal in favour of a reconciliation with his repressed instincts. The Mayor's is a highly functional intervention which bears immediate fruit in Patrizio's brief but unprecedented confrontation with Geltrude.

A close reading, then, of the allegorical backdrop provided by Marzallo and the Marzallesi in the opening three chapters of *Profumo* reveals not a steady descent into sexual estrangement and incommunicability but the opening skirmishes of a struggle between the ascetic, the positivist, and the pagan. In the secular, Unitary state, Patrizio and Eugenia remain in thrall to Christian dualism. Indeed, it is hinted that the positivist ideology of the new Italy inherits a religious loathing of the flesh. The protagonists are already directed, however, towards a healthy synthesis of mind and body.

b) *Chapters 4-8*

Chapters 4-8 see Patrizio move cautiously towards an apprehension of the sexually repressive nature of both his religious and scientific formation under the guidance of Mola. Eugenia, conversely, retreats further into self-denial. Towards the end of this section, Mola's allies, the Mayor's daughters, begin to erode her isolation.

Mola enters the novel following Eugenia's first epileptic attack. Recent critics have underlined his pragmatic readiness to let illness run its course and disdain for the 'paroloni di moda' (p. 369) of those medics who discount the 'solo gran medico: Dio'. This is adduced as evidence that a neo-idealist Capuana seeks to reconcile the rigours of positivism and consolations of religion. Yet Mola's faith stands in stark, polemical contrast to Geltrude's asceticism. His is a quasi-pantheistic creed where recommending oneself to God is synonymous with trusting in the healing powers of nature. He prescribes solely that Patrizio and Eugenia forsake their 'prigione volontaria' (p. 399) for the consolations offered by the spectacle of nature. Mola is no Catholic apologist but the foremost advocate of nature in its struggle with ascetic religion and science. He is not set off by a caste of grotesque rustics but ably marshals the Marzallesi to force Patrizio from his monastic seclusion.

At this stage, Mola's principal assistant is the Mayor who, indeed, may be seen as a burlesque variation on the doctor. They share the same speech-patterns and irrepressible garrulity. Where, however, the Mayor merely bores Patrizio, Mola inspires instantaneous 'fiducia' (p. 370). In view of recent criticism that the novel's conclusion is over-reliant on the doctor's last-minute didactic intervention, we must stress the cloyingly expressed faith which Patrizio immediately places in his influence. The hitherto taciturn protagonist expounds with gushing candour his fears for Eugenia's health and their relationship.[60] In what, then, does Mola's authority reside?

For Patrizio, a doctor is 'quasi un confessore' (p. 370). Commentators have seen in this implied fusion of science and religion an echo of Capuana's own ideological position. Yet Patrizio, unlike Mola, omits the vital third element: a respect for the prerogatives of nature. Self-evidently, Mola also represents a father-figure, the male influence that Patrizio has lacked. He is promptly identified as a mentor and potential catalyst, and his decisive intervention is clearly signposted.[61]

Patrizio draws strength from his first exchange with Mola to confront his mother, once more, over her hostility to Eugenia.[62] Patrizio's subjection to Geltrude has been overstated. Already he feels that 'quella ch'era stata la colonna maestra della sua vita: la gran riverenza per la madre' (p. 371) is tottering. Geltrude rapidly reduces him to abject servility, but the seeds of rebellion are sown.

Reviewing the encounter, Patrizio reveals that his positivist education is potentially as pernicious as his mother's asceticism. The 'paroloni di moda' of deterministic psychology serve to excuse Geltrude's behaviour. Maternal jealousy is a 'fissazione' (p. 377) born of the trying circumstances in which she has lived. Patrizio's analytical powers merely reinforce his mother's influence and his own passivity. Like the protagonists of 'Povero dottore!' and 'Gelosia', he is undermined by an *esprit d'analyse.*

Similarly, his horror of Eugenia's sexual impulses, fired by Geltrude's asceticism, is bolstered by a positivist diagnosis. He displays again a quasi-religious respect for science as he recalls consulting a doctor over Eugenia's suitability for marriage. Informed that women 'son diventate oggetti fragilissimi, da maneggiare con cautela, se non vogliamo vederceli rompere fra le dita!' (p. 377), he takes to heart words intended semi-seriously. Science and religion combine to proscribe the natural.

With Mola's gentle prompting, however, Patrizio rapidly begins to glimpse that an isolated upbringing and studies unsupported

by experience have falsified 'la prospettiva della realtà' (p. 377). He envies Eugenia her 'senso pratico della vita'. It becomes increasingly clear that *Profumo* is no case-study but a *Bildungsroman* charting an initially brisk learning process.

It is just as the novel's hortative character is exposed and just as Patrizio realizes that he lacks his wife's ability to engage with a distrusted nature, that Eugenia first emits the 'profumo' of the title. This alone should militate against a naturalistic reading of the phenomenon. Yet critics have persistently failed to underline the symbolism inherent in the scent itself.

The traditional bridal associations of orange-blossom clearly denote a further protest on the part of Eugenia's neglected body. The scent particularly clings 'alla biancheria, alle vesti' (p. 391) and nightly invades the newly-weds' bedroom. It is an invitation to partake of nature's feast and to consummate marriage not solely with Eugenia but with a healthy instinctive sexuality. Only in seeing the emission as a cipher for the sphere with which Patrizio must learn to engage, can we understand Capuana's decision to name the novel after what most have judged a peripheral episode. For the moment, however, the orange-blossom is, for Patrizio, only a symbol of Eugenia's traumatizing duality as virgin and temptress. He is, as yet, unready to equate her sexual desire with her 'senso pratico della vita'.

As Patrizio tentatively questions his religious and scientific formation, we begin to perceive that Eugenia is the subject of a parallel conflict between the ascetic and instinctive. Her 'senso pratico della vita' is undermined by disgust for the female body. Conditioned into dissimulating 'disturbi femminili' (p. 398), she disguises her state and seeks to cleanse herself of the shameful 'profumo'. Frantic scrubbing merely serves to intensify an emission which brings a giddying sense of release. Again, then, it is identified as a vent for repressed instinct.

Discussing her case, Mola tellingly likens olfactory symptoms of neurosis to the 'odore di santità' (p. 392) emitted by the corpses

of mystics. Seeking to trick Eugenia into revealing hidden symptoms, he terms the emission a rare side-effect of pregnancy and asks whether she would prefer, like other pregnant woman, to eat coal or cinders. The reference to canonical penances is a tacit jibe at her seclusion. Eugenia, as bound to the monastery as Patrizio, shares his anti-corporal philosophy of self-abnegation.[63]

Believing that she is pregnant, Eugenia visits the monastery's chapel to offer thanks to the *Madonna dello Spasimo*. There is an evident parallel between Eugenia's epileptic fits and the raptures of the 'spasimo'. Both mystical visions and Eugenia's 'profumo' are implicitly traced to mortification of the senses.[64] Eugenia, however, is impeded from worship by Padreterno. Alone in a neglected church, nowhere is his allegorical function more blatant. He insists on showing Eugenia the discarded wax figures once employed in the Easter procession. Lamenting Marzallo's impiety, he particularly highlights the image of Pilate. We might detect a veiled reference to Patrizio, dithering envoy of a secular state which consigns Christ to the grave. Yet despite his critique of rampant materialism, Padreterno does not advocate a return to ascetic piety. He painstakingly demonstrates how the friars manipulated mechanical models of the saints. He mocks the austere image of Antony of Padua, wishing that the Christ-child on his lap might pull his ears 'per insegnargli un po' di carità' (p. 407). We sense that he is deliberately distracting the exasperated Eugenia and coaxing her from self-mortifying devotions. She is urged to forsake the discipline of the saints for a tolerant, pantheistic faith which finds its temple in the convent's neglected garden. This renewed conflict between asceticism and nature leads directly to Eugenia's second attack.

Padreterno, then, is neither a comic mechanical nor a lifeless cipher but reveals himself as an ally of Mola. Indeed, we might see the doctor as flanked by Padreterno and the Mayor. We shall observe that these two representatives of the Church and of the secular state urge reconciliation with a nature that their predecessors have proscribed. They present instructive images of synthesis.

Recovering from her second attack, Eugenia is torn between the shame which her irrepressible body inspires and a nascent suspicion that mental equilibrium demands a frank acknowledgment of her sexuality. When Patrizio, fearful of the effect of erotic stimuli on her precarious sanity, assures Eugenia of recovery 'se stai tranquilla, se sai frenarti' (p. 410), she appalls him by replying: 'Baciami! Voglio guarir subito!'

Sexual frustration, however, soon shades into resentful estrangement as Eugenia's becomes progressively warier of her secretive husband and hostile mother-in-law. The fading of the 'profumo', welcomed by Patrizio, signals a growing indifference, a tacit acceptance that the couple's sexual life is over. Yet we should note hope for their union in Patrizio's half-ashamed nostalgia for his wife sensual 'capricci' (p. 416). These had revealed 'un che di malsano o sensuale, da cui veniva urtata la sua rigida idealità'. There is continuing evidence, then, of cautious questioning of Patrizio's ideological categories.

A relaxation of his attitude towards sex leads Patrizio to attempt a reconciliation with his wife. He prizes Eugenia from a lonely vigil by the window which again serves as an image for entrapment within the individual consciousness and the inability to bridge a chasm of non-communication. Yet Patrizio's unprecedented eagerness to visit the monastery-garden merely arouses Eugenia's suspicions. She nervously lacerates plants, a self-evident image of the mortification of her natural impulses. Padreterno is again present to applaud a healthy escape from seclusion. Assuming that they are gathering blooms to honour the Madonna, he praises the renunciation of asceticism for a faith in harmony with natural cycles. Eugenia, however, misunderstands, perceiving a tacit accusation of frivolous impiety. Patrizio's first attempt both to reconquer his wife and to engage with nature fails as Eugenia retreats into the asceticism which he is beginning to transcend.

If Eugenia alternately scorns and misapprehends Padreterno's promptings, Marzallo provides her, in the Mayor's three daughters, with an altogether more persuasive spur to forsake asceticism. These and, in particular, the irrepressible Giulia exert a parallel influence upon Eugenia to that of Mola upon Patrizio. There is evidence of active collaboration between the two parties and of a concerted municipal campaign to wrest the hermetic newcomers from their traumatizing seclusion. When, following the initial manifestation of the 'profumo', the Mayor first sends his daughters to visit the convalescing Eugenia, Patrizio cannot conceive how he knows of her illness. The obvious intermediary is Mola himself. That characters habitually dismissed as comic relief should be earmarked as potential medical assistants points to their unacknowledged diegetic functionality.

The daughters' apparently disconnected babble serves two purposes.[65] Firstly, it reveals an irreverence toward religion, manifested in the gentle teasing of Padreterno and a mock-baptism performed in the monastery-garden. This is explicitly contrasted to the newly-weds' excessive devotions when Giulia marvels at their daily attendance of Mass. She tacitly urges the rejection of an ascetic creed for Mola's pantheistic Christianity which accommodates vestiges of paganism.

Secondly, the daughters begin to undermine Geltrude's power (which, as we have seen, is associated with that of the Church). Uncowed by her imposing silence, they recall other cases of hostility between mother and daughter-in-law, and, in particular, a celebrated local case of comic rivalry. They seek, then, to deflate Geltrude's possessiveness and reduce it to a common maternal trait. Even Geltrude's martyred pose is shared by the Mayor's wife: 'Abbiamo la croce della mamma! Gran disgrazia! Crede di avere addosso tutti i malanni del mondo' (p. 386).

One may argue that the de-dramatization of Geltrude constitutes 'una marcia indietro ottimistica' from the proto-Freudian portrayal of an Oedipal relationship.[66] One must, nonetheless, recognize a further pointer to an optimistic conclusion in a minor

key. In this context, a comment made by the Mayor as he introduces his daughters is equally significant. Anticipating a stormy session of the *Consiglio*, he insists: 'Con la legalità non si fa nulla [...]. Il più delle volte, un po' di arbitrio, o di violenza, risolve meglio certe questioni.' (p. 384). This is not simply an autobiographical instance of Capuana's imperialistic *Realpolitik*. His words surely urge a cathartic act of will which, rather than reinstating metaphysical man, highlights human resilience and ability to achieve a precarious *modus vivendi*.

It is a measure of Patrizio's awakening that, following his failed reconciliation with Eugenia, he welcomes the second irreverent invasion of his inner sanctum by the Mayor's daughters (Chapter 8). Here Giulia provides a further goad to the act of will advocated by her father.[67] She recklessly leans from a window to signal to her lover, displaying a blithe disregard for the underlying void. She thus recalls the demise of her near-namesake Giulietta. This, we have seen, was a protest against Giulietta's inability to wrest Patrizio from his mother's influence and a warning that the relationship between Patrizio and Eugenia might founder in an abyss of non-communication. Giulia, conversely, highlights a second aspect of the novel's abyss symbolism. In our study of Chapters 1-4, we noted that the chasm which Marzallo overlooks is also a cipher for the moral distance which Patrizio perceives between his ascetic idealism and the depths of human nature. Giulia's gesture urges the couple to forego life-denying isolation and to grasp that at the bottom of the abyss lies a healthy reconciliation with nature. It pre-empts the elopement which forces her father's consent and spurs the newly-weds to a leap of faith. Giulia and Giulietta, then, are ideological doubles flanking Eugenia that point, respectively, to the dangers of asceticism and to the possibility of transcending it.

The daughters' second visit concludes with the introduction of their semi-crazed chaperon Pina. Her frantic 'ballo di San Vito' (p. 427) reveals, however, not the comical servant of critical tradition but an embodiment of excessive vitality, of nature unmarshalled by religion or reason. Her relentless mockery provokes in

Padreterno both outrage and compassion. The repressed Patrizio and Eugenia take pleasure in her joyful energy, but she simultaneously serves to warn of the dangers of untrammelled nature. We are reminded that Patrizio's predecessor had exclusively haunted the monastery-garden only to lapse into insanity.

The second section of *Profumo* ends, then, with a signal that Capuana does not advocate a neo-pagan reunion with nature but a synthesis of mind and body. United in laughter, however, husband and wife are momentarily reconciled. Patrizio feels that 'stesse per rompersi dentro di lui qualcosa da cui era stato lungamente avvinto e impedito in tutti i movimenti del cuore' (p. 428). It is as if liberation depended upon 'un piccolissimo sforzo' (p. 429). He is thwarted by Geltrude's importune arrival but one must stress his rapid progress under Mola's tutelage in Chapters 4-8. This is a *Bildungsroman* charting a steep learning-curve.

In Chapters 9-11, Geltrude's death will arrest the process and plunge Patrizio into filial guilt but acquired knowledge lies dormant, and the Marzallesi will strive incessantly to reawaken it. With her pleasure in Giulia's company, meanwhile, Eugenia appears to be emerging from her own asceticism.

c) *Chapters 9-11*

The pivotal third section of the novel charts the onset of Eugenia's liberation. Central to her evolution is the procession of the flagellants in Chapter 9, an episode often interpreted as the positivistic documentation of vanishing customs from a detached, continentalized viewpoint. Yet a careful reading of *Profumo*'s allegorical subtext immediately alerts us to the parallel between the flagellants and the self-mortifying protagonists. Indeed, this is heavily underlined. Mola remarks of Patrizio: 'Ci vogliono i flagellanti per stanarlo!' (p. 432). The populace, meanwhile, are more interested in Eugenia's first public appearance than the procession itself: 'lo spettacolo per gli altri era lei' (p. 434).

In Eugenia's appalled fascination for the flagellants, there is the shock of self-recognition. Bullied by Giulia, she emerges from isolation to be confronted with a grotesque mirror-image. Viewing the procession from another of the high windows to which she and Patrizio are drawn, she is forced to question her aloof idealism.

The Easter procession provides more, however, than an objective correlative for the protagonists' asceticism. It marks the passing of the old Catholic order and the triumph of the secular state.[68] The secular authorities preside over a symbolic burial of Christ. (Capuana scrupulously enumerates Marzallo's civic representatives but mentions no churchman.) It is no coincidence that Geltrude, insistently associated with the Mother Church, falls fatally ill at the procession's height.[69] The allegory is underlined when the sedan-chair which transports her home is likened to the Holy Sepulchre.

It is hinted, however, that secular triumphalism is misplaced. Firstly, by permitting the appearance of the flagellants following a hiatus of anticlericalism, the lay authorities signal that they have merely inherited their predecessors' zeal in repressing the natural. Secondly, the victory procession arouses the profound religiosity of the people. A boisterous crowd constantly impedes the Holy Sepulchre. Their refusal to collaborate in the symbolic burial anticipates a resurrection of the religious impulse in a less repressive form.

The watching Mola tellingly urges a more tolerant approach to the peasantry's quasi-pagan devotions. He again goads an ascetic bourgeoisie and advocates a faith which absorbs from popular religion a respect for mystery and an instinctive relationship with nature. *Profumo* offers not a neo-spiritualist reinstatement of metaphysical man in the manner of Serao or Fogazzaro but a positive rereading of the irrational, the instinctive, the popular, condemned as bestial by naturalist and decadent alike.

The aftermath of Geltrude's death underlines the vestigial presence of Catholic asceticism in secular positivism. As Andrea conceives a veritable cult of his dead mother, turning her bedroom into a 'santuario' (p. 452), her role as a cipher for a discredited but tenacious ideology becomes ever clearer, her ghostly presence underlining her symbolic function. It becomes impossible to separate positivist distrust of the fragile feminine organism and traces of Geltrude's Catholic demonization of the sexually predatory woman, as both combine to distance Patrizio from Eugenia.

A recognition of Geltrude's posthumous grip on Patrizio provokes a reappearance of Eugenia's epilepsy. This, however, should be interpreted as a positive sign. It signifies a reawakening of her body and reveals her growing horror for Patrizio's self-punishing devotions. Jolted by the mirror-image offered by the flagellants, she begins to question her asceticism. Geltrude's death is ultimately liberating, permitting Eugenia to view the faith embodied by her mother-in-law as a sinister revenant.

Yet pertinacious asceticism still combines with bourgeois prejudice to postpone a healthy reconciliation with nature. Eugenia's aversion to confiding in her maid Dorata ('Doveva mettere a parte delle sue pene una serva? [...] Dio mio, scendere così in basso!' (p. 456)) does not indicate that Capuana aspires to the refined atmosphere of the post-naturalist novel. It signals, on one hand, Eugenia's blindness to the folk-wisdom of the peasantry and, on the other, a crippling prudery: Eugenia scorns Dorata for her illegitimate child.[70]

This section of the novel ends, however, with a limpidly allegorical pointer to imminent enlightenment. The sun emerges from behind 'la cupola della chiesa che lo aveva nascosto fin allora' (p. 457) and casts a vivid light on the bustling streets of Marzallo (severely and significantly framed by church towers). The entranced Eugenia now envies the squalid peasant-women to whom God has granted children. For what sin, she wonders, is she

left barren? Her asceticism clearly constitutes a sin against nature.

In Chapters 9-11, then, the protagonists exchange roles. As Eugenia is gradually directed towards a reconciliation with her body, it is now Patrizio's turn to relapse into asceticism. There is evidence in Chapters 12-14 that he will soon resume his learning-process. This, however, is not perceived by a newly liberated Eugenia who begins to despair of their relationship.

d) *Chapters 12-14*

Eugenia's embryonic appreciation of Marzallo's robust virtues pre-empts her first engagement with the natural world in Chapters 12-14. Prompted by Giulia, she now breaks her enclosure by visiting the sanctuary of the *Madonna delle Grazie*. That this is no mere folkloric excursion is underlined by Giulia's success in persuading Mola both to second her proposal and to join the party. Giulia is again identified as a valued collaborator in Mola's quest to coax the protagonists from their retreat.

The visit to the shrine introduces Eugenia to a pragmatic Marian faith unafraid to engage with the worldly and to acknowledge mystery. It is guarded by the Capuchin *frà* Lorenzo, habitually teased for his dirty hands. In stark contrast to the Carmelites, in whose monastery the protagonists now dwell, he professes a creed free of the neurotic cult of purity. By invoking grace, Eugenia follows Mola's injunction to trust in a healing nature which, in his pantheistic Christianity, is substantially synonymous with divine providence.

Eugenia is likewise urged to question her elitism. Giulia's determination to defy her family by marrying a suitor of plebeian origin prefigures the passing of a rigid hierarchy. This is underlined as Giulia (a member, like Capuana, of the landed bourgeoisie) mocks the absurd snobbery of the impoverished 'nobili del paese' (p. 468). We are reminded that Patrizio too is proud of his aristocratic lineage and risks descending into similar

ritual-bound seclusion. Capuana provides few clues as to Eugenia's background (which again militates against a naturalistic reading of her illness). We might reasonably surmise that, as a neighbor of the unmarried Patrizio, she too belongs to a nobility reduced to genteel poverty.[71] In her elitism, she again echoes her husband's neurosis but proves a more receptive learner.

While Eugenia prays to the *Madonna delle Grazie*, Patrizio, in a heavily underlined parallel, visits the 'shrine' of Geltrude. The two parties meet while returning to Marzallo. The 'rassegnazione di santa' (p. 475) for which the mourning Patrizio now extols Geltrude is brought into sharp contrast with the humble but robust faith which the Madonna inspires. Again, we see that a misunderstanding of the concept of resignation is a shared failing of Capuana's fictional protagonists. Giacinta, urged to withstand stigma stoically, merely resigns herself to the role of scapegoat. For Patrizio too, resignation is renunciation, an ideology which dignifies his impotence and reinforces his aristocratic pride in principled poverty. Eugenia grasps, however, that the Marzallesi combine humble petitions for grace with a joyful participation in the struggle for life.

Revitalized by her pilgrimage, Eugenia seeks reconciliation with Patrizio. Nowhere more clearly than here, however, is her sexual nature thwarted by a combination of religious asceticism and positivism. As she confronts Patrizio, the half-light of the monastery symbolically exposes 'il biancore del viso di lei e il biancore delle mani' (p. 471). She is, once again, trapped within Patrizio's ideal of purity. As Patrizio attributes her desire to be 'accarezzata, baciata, amata come tutte le altre' (p. 472) to her illness and insists that her nerves dictate her words, it his clearly this ideal which informs his positivistic analysis and permits him to safeguard an image of woman as asexual victim of male desire.

As she gradually forsakes asceticism for a dialogue with nature, Eugenia despairs of a parallel transformation in Patrizio and is tempted to direct her reawakened sexual energies elsewhere. She fails to detect signs that Patrizio is ready to resume the learning

process suspended by Geltrude's death. To his horror, his grief dwindles and, with it, the influence of his mother's life-denying ideology. In a passage which parallels Eugenia's first acknowledgment of Marzallo's robust vitality, Patrizio pauses *en route* for the cemetery to contemplate the landscape and experience a pleasurable 'specie di momentaneo oblìo' (pp. 486-87). The 'abisso', the symbolic plunge into the worldly, suddenly appears less daunting. A lone hawk frightened by its own shadow is an unmistakable cipher for Patrizio. Yet in the attribution of his aloof idealism to self-generated phantoms, there is the first suggestion of the playing-down of ideological factors which mars the novel's conclusion.

In a further pointer to recovery, Patrizio urges the suspicious Eugenia to join him in the monastery-garden, observing: 'Abbiamo smarrito la via di laggiù!' (p. 477). This is a guilelessly allegorical sequence. Padreterno clears pathways in preparation for the return of the exiled lovers to an earthly paradise. He presents Eugenia with two caged birds which transparently represent the protagonists while a prowling 'gattaccio' (p. 479) warns of the arrival of a threatening third party in Ruggiero. Eugenia's impulsive freeing of the birds again pre-empts a cathartic conclusion. Thus, as the couple take daily silent walks in the garden, tormented by a sense of estrangement, their choice of venue and renunciation of seclusion strongly prefigures their redemption.

The emissaries of Marzallo continue, meanwhile, to lure the couple from their isolation. First Giulia introduces 'la zia Vita'. This eternally youthful matron, this earth-goddess, endlessly persecuted by suitors, is a crude embodiment of Marzallo's vitality, a resumé of all that its representatives have urged.[72] She demonstrably collaborates with Mola (whom she is tellingly tempted to marry) by persuading Eugenia to join her in therapeutic nature-rambles which the doctor has prescribed in vain.

Giulia's father, meanwhile, works on Patrizio by bullying him into tutoring his son Ruggiero. A lecture which he delivers to the recalcitrant Ruggiero in Patrizio's presence indicates that this is a mere pretext to undermine the protagonists' seclusion. The remark 'il peggio sordo è chi non vuol sentire' (p. 484), nominally directed at Ruggiero, is clearly an exasperated plea to Patrizio to heed the Marzallesi's reiterated advice.

At the conclusion of Chapters 12-14, then, both protagonists are, under the tutelage of Marzallo, unambiguously moving towards a reconciliation with their own nature. Danger resides solely, as Chapters 15-17 will reveal, in the unequal pace of their evolution and failure to acknowledge each other's progress.

e) *Chapters 15-17*

In Chapter 15, Eugenia's full awakening to her sexuality is triggered by a symbolic descent to the bowels of the earth. The excursion to caves once occupied by Sicily's first inhabitants again simply cannot be read as a folkloric diversion. Prompted by Vita, Eugenia's passionate exploration represents a discovery of the instinctive life which underlies the constructions of reason and religion. It is here that she first notes and is sexually disturbed by Ruggiero's admiring presence. The excursion ends in a banquet, given by the bountiful Vita. This is a symbolic partaking of the fruits of the earth, underlining the positive character of Eugenia's awakening. The appearance, however, of the anarchic Pina, who may be seen as Vita's negative double personifying the destructive aspects of nature, warns that Eugenia's sexual energies must be channelled into a *juste milieu* between reason, faith, and instinct.

Eugenia's subsequent attempts to arouse her husband's sexual interest are, however, interpreted by Patrizio as further symptoms of neurosis. Through a pseudo-positivistic fear of exacerbating Eugenia's condition, he systematically keeps his distance, inadvertently surrendering the field to Ruggiero and pushing his wife towards adultery.

Recent critics have regretted Ruggiero's courtship as a mechanical device which permits Capuana both to manufacture friction between husband and wife in the absence of Geltrude and to portray the virtuous resistance of a non-naturalistic heroine.[73] They thereby revive De Roberto's reading of the episode as 'la lotta della sensazione con la volontà e il trionfo di questa aiutata dal sentimento morale del proprio dovere'.[74] It is thus considered a further measure of Capuana's neo-idealistic renunciation of naturalist secular fatalism.

If, however, Eugenia's resistance is unquestionably anti-deterministic, our reading of *Profumo* has highlighted the redemption of 'sensazione' from the proscriptions of science and religion. Will is set against restrictive conditioning rather than the potentially liberating senses. Eugenia's reawakened sexual energies must not be suppressed but directed into their legitimate channel. Ruggiero is no wooden seducer, but like all of *Profumo*'s secondary characters, the embodiment of an ideology.

Ruggiero is the dogmatic positivist, the fiercely anti-clerical champion of progress. He personifies a pursuit of male sexual self-interest fostered by an exclusively secular culture. Eugenia escapes the pull of asceticism to be exposed to an ideology which, as for so many heroines of *Le appassionate*, can only lead to stigmatization as fallen woman or semi-innocent victim of male desire. Just as Pina highlights the dangers of a Dionysiac union with nature, Ruggiero underlines the risks of materialism. The semi-secular, semi-religious institution of marriage is implicitly promoted as the sole redeemer of female sexuality.

There are repeated hints, however, that the dangers of adultery and materialistic self-interest will be evaded. Eugenia clearly does not despair of saving her marriage if Patrizio's mere presence 'bastava [...] a tranquillarla, a fugarle dall'animo ogni visione turbatrice' (p. 502). The triduum which she devotes to the *Madonna dello Spasimo* reveals the humble faith in grace obtained from her pilgrimage to the *Madonna delle Grazie*. Her re-

use and floral decoration of the monastery-church, which, to Padreterno's delight, regains 'un po' di vita' (p. 512), marks a passage from resigned asceticism to the active and pantheistic Marian faith of Marzallo. However tempted by Ruggiero, she is clearly close to reconquering psychic health. Meanwhile, Padreterno, the embodiment of a healthy religious sentiment, conscientiously frustrates Ruggiero's quest for a moment's solitude with Eugenia in the earthly paradise of the monastery-garden.[75]

In Chapters 15-17, then, Eugenia is reconciled to her sexual nature. Having overcome dualistic contempt for the flesh, however, she is warned not to forsake the claims of the spirit by succumbing to Ruggiero's materialism or Pina's barbarism. In Chapters 18-23, Patrizio completes his own process of liberation and leads Eugenia towards a synthesis of mind and body.

f) *Chapters 18-23*

The novel's final section begins with the exorcism of Geltrude under Mola's guidance. Given recent criticism that Mola's intervention is improbably decisive, we should note that Patrizio spontaneously demands his aid, thrusting symbolic paternity onto the embarrassed doctor. If Mola deliberately plants himself on the path to the cemetery, hoping to distract Patrizio from his cult of the dead, he is nonetheless visibly 'stupito' (p. 522) when, unprovoked, Patrizio confesses to a 'vita sbagliata' (p. 520).

Patrizio now attributes to Geltrude's influence a fear of the 'subbuglio della vita che ignoro' (p. 522) and of his wife's sexual impulses. He frequents her grave solely to flaunt 'lo spettacolo della mia vita ch'ella volle così qual è, e che dovrebbe essere tutt'altra!' (p. 521-22). Patrizio has, then, reached conclusions to which Mola and accomplices have directed him since his arrival in Marzallo. The banal advice that Mola now offers, advocating a 'giusta misura' (p. 524) and urging 'i vivi coi vivi, i morti coi morti', clearly cannot determine an ideological volte-face. Patrizio's confession indicates that Mola has already worked his

spell. The doctor's homilies are no sudden revelation but the encapsulation of Patrizio's own thoughts. Mola does not function as a *deus ex machina* but oversees the final delicate stages of a process which he has long since initiated.

We witness, then, a symbolic transfer of authority from Geltrude to Mola before Geltrude's tomb, as Patrizio begs his mother's spirit to leave him in peace, and Mola forbids him to return to the cemetery. Renouncing asceticism, Patrizio begins to heed the lessons of Mola's fellow Marzallesi. He is particularly struck by the efforts of village boys to dislodge a nest of sparrows from the monastery-wall. The sparrows are a self-evident cipher for the protagonists who jealously build a 'nido' now become a prison. They echo the caged birds, earlier liberated by Eugenia, and the two songbirds which hover about the heads of Mola and Patrizio as Geltrude is finally exorcized (p. 521). As Patrizio mentally urges the youngsters on, he clearly yearns to be flushed from his idyll and to find at the bottom of the abyss the beckoning world of nature.

Yet a new tone enters with this episode. Patrizio envies the boys' ruthlessness and aptitude for the struggle for life, qualities which his ascetic, renunciatory education had failed to instill. His emotional participation in the boys' brutality is presented as a belated learning experience, preparing him for the act of will required to reconquer Eugenia. The sensitive portrayal of an effort to forsake repressive ideologies for a cautious reconciliation with nature, becomes, at its conclusion, a celebration of Darwinian survivalism with Nietzschean overtones. It is this rather than Mola's long-established influence which renders the final pages dramatically unconvincing.

Patrizio is still unaware, however, of the immediate dangers threatening his marriage. Strengthened by a healthy faith, Eugenia's attempts to marshal her sexual urges trigger a reappearance of her 'profumo' which now becomes a positive token of her powers of resistance. These are definitively tested as

Giulia elopes, and the Mayor confines the hot-headed Ruggiero to the monastery lest he commit an imprudence.

Giulia's actions again tacitly admonish Patrizio and Eugenia. Hers is a brutal gesture designed to extract a word. As Patrizio hesitates to pronounce the single cathartic word which he senses will reconquer Eugenia, Giulia rejects Eugenia's pleas to resign herself, breaches silence, and imposes dialogue.

Yet it is the Ruggiero who first heeds Giulia's example. Placed under Eugenia's guard, he makes a long-withheld confession of love. The topos of the cathartic speech-act is reiterated as he repeatedly begs Eugenia for 'una sola parola' of consent (pp. 541-43). Eugenia's successful resistance has been heavily prefigured. Yet it is assured not by a conscious act of will but by a recurrence of her epilepsy. As Ruggiero's court reaches its crescendo, she loses consciousness. This is surely to be interpreted as the grace invoked from the *Madonna dello Spasimo*. Only on coming around, does she find the words to dismiss the horrified Ruggiero. Hers is not a victory of will over the senses, but of faith over sexual self-interest. Succumbing to a renewed attack on Ruggiero's departure, she again emits the bridal scent of orange-blossom, which finally becomes a badge of marital fidelity.

Called to attend Eugenia, Mola urges Patrizio to resume the confession commenced at his mother's grave. Again, one must stress that Mola's subsequent commentary merely confirms Patrizio's self-diagnosis. Patrizio accuses himself of pursuing a mendacious ideal of purity and nurturing an irrational contempt for the flesh. He is thus prepared for Mola's assertion that 'si tratta d'un disordine morale che ne produce uno fisico' (p. 546). As the doctor urges a reconciliation with his sexual nature, Patrizio comments that 'da due settimane mi ribollono nella mente le stessissime cose che lei mi ha dette' (p. 548), a remark amply born out by the learning-process which we have plotted.

What rings false here is not Mola's long-established paternal influence but a fresh attempt to downplay the institutional basis

of Patrizio's neurosis. Mola now attributes this merely to isolation and excessive cerebration ('la fantasia eccitata, il pensiero insistente' (p. 547)). Hitherto, the neo-*scapigliato* analysis of the second *Giacinta* and some *appassionate*, where neurosis derives from idealistic seclusion, has evolved into an altogether bolder critique which traces Patrizio's inhibitions to the repressive influence of ascetic Christianity and the anti-natural prescriptions of positivism. What renders the conclusion of *Profumo* facile is not a retreat from proto-Freudian puncturing of bourgeois sexual complacency but the resolution of an *ideological* crisis through socialization and the exercise of the individual will.

Patrizio is urged to seek reconciliation through an arbitrary act of violence, an affirmation of his vitality. He rapidly despairs of overcoming Eugenia's distrust through rational means. His overtures repulsed, he perceives 'un abisso che nessuno può colmare, né varcare' (p. 553) between the manifestations of thought and 'la verità nascosta nell'intimo cervello'. The allegorical function of the chasm beneath the monastery as a cipher for non-communication is thus heavily underlined.

It is Padreterno who extracts Patrizio from the *impasse* of logic and urges an empirical act of will. Incited by his own memories of losing a young wife to a rival, he warns Patrizio to be on his guard against Ruggiero. Padreterno's bride, of course, demands to be interpreted allegorically as a humanity living in pantheistic harmony with a nature exalted as divine creation. Davies argues that Padreterno's exhortations are inappropriately placed in the mouth of a marginal grotesque.[76] Yet it is entirely appropriate that Patrizio is finally spurred to action not by Mola's rational analysis but by the allegorical embodiment of a healthy fusion of faith and instinct.[77]

The episode is marred, rather, by further hints that Patrizio's neurosis is self-generated. Capuana again resorts to bird-imagery as the reunion of a pair of blackbirds (pp. 554-55) prefigures imminent reconciliation. With the pun on 'merlo' implying that

estrangement is the fruit of foolish obsession, he again downplays the influence of institutional thought-forms.[78]

Stimulated by both Mola and Padreterno, Patrizio astonishes himself by brutally dismissing Ruggiero. He finds strength to conquer the 'abisso' between husband and wife in recollections of his courtship of Eugenia. This he now recalls as the bridging of a gap between facing windows in defiance of parental opposition. Surprised by his new-found capacity for action, Patrizio feels 'qualcosa di nuovo e di definitivo' (p. 559) form within him. An incongruously Nietzschean celebration of male vitality thus prefaces a long-anticipated final reconciliation. As a storm cleanses nature of imaginary impurities, Patrizio rushes to comfort Eugenia, reconquering her with a combination of cathartic word-act and physical assertion. At the novel's conclusion, they jointly savour the inviting 'profumo' emanating from a pristine earthly paradise (p. 565).[79]

This final coming-together is amply signposted and motivated. Under the tutelage of the Marzallesi, the protagonists have been coaxed from an asceticism sanctioned by both religion and science to an acceptance of their sexual nature. Yet these pages are unquestionably more persuasive symbolically than dramatically. If, having resisted the temptations of materialistic self-interest, Eugenia is ready to channel her awakened sexuality into its legitimate outlet, we must feel that she too expeditely sheds lust for Ruggiero and distrust of Patrizio. Similarly, where one would accept an embryonic vitality in Patrizio, his transformation into assertive protector is unconvincing. One is too forcefully reminded of the doomed attempt to escape from consuming neurosis into a Dionysiac realm of will portrayed in such near-contemporary novels as *Il trionfo della morte*. We might equally note, at the novel's conclusion, too neat a gender-division between the lessons that nature imparts. The male is urged to exalt will, the female faith. Both ultimately appear over-enthusiastic acolytes.

* * * *

Yet for all the hyperbole of the novel's conclusion, our reading of *Profumo* as allegorical *Bildungsroman* reveals an altogether more coherent text than critical tradition has allowed. It is neither a regionalistic sketch in the 'national' tradition marred by scientific curiosity nor a psychopathological case-study diluted by neo-idealistic optimism. Its superficially *verista* milieu provides more than ironic contrast, comic relief, or an objective correlative. Marzallo functions dynamically as a constant goad to the foregrounded characters. Its inhabitants conspire to lure the protagonists from asceticism to an acceptance of their sexual, instinctive nature. The 'profumo' of the title is less physiological symptom than symbolical invitation to partake of the fruits of the earth. Patrizio's Oedipal relationship with Geltrude is not a proto-Freudian insight but a cipher for the paralysing influence of the Mother Church. Geltrude's hatred of Eugenia less sexual jealousy than the anathemitization of a temptress.

Our examination of *Le appassionate* shows, moreover, that *Profumo* does not signal the onset of a neo-idealist 'involuzione' on the brink of the 1890s. The critical examination of positivism commenced in the Follini episode of *Giacinta* develops in these tales into an analysis of a debilitating *esprit d'analyse* where the abulic male employs the language of positivist psychology to dignify neurosis. *Profumo* boldly places male neurosis within an institutional context where positivism is shown to inherit the anti-natural strictures of the ascetic religion which it has supplanted. Capuana does not thus aspire to the refined spirituality of Fogazzaro and Serao but offers a positive post-naturalist reading of the irrational and instinctive, censuring positivism less for complacent materialism than for repressive puritanism. This is best illustrated in the treatment of Eugenia. Capuana seeks to liberate woman, denounced as brute instrument of nature by naturalists, decadents, and neo-spiritualists alike, from the repressive structures of both ascetic Christianity and positivism. The woman=nature equation remains, however, unchallenged. Inherently closer to the instinctive sphere, Eugenia reconciles Patrizio to his body, but requires the guiding presence

of a husband to marshal her own sexuality. She thus learns to cultivate a pantheistic faith rather than masculine will.

Recent criticism has neglected not only an analysis of institutionalized positivism but a critique of the vestigial influence of ascetic Christianity. Here, Capuana draws on a number of sources. There are reminiscences of Carducci's 'Alle fonti del Clitumno' (1876) in his censure of a renunciatory, emasculating creed and of D'Annunzio's *San Pantaleone* (1886) in his celebration of the pantheistic roots of popular Catholicism.[80] There may equally be early traces of Nietzsche's attack on the Christian slave-mentality. Yet, as we have seen, Capuana does not advocate a return to a Classical or pagan union with nature. Ruggiero and Pina warn against materialism and the consecration of the senses. Mind and body must be brought into synthesis. Capuana's critique of a religion which divides human nature against itself is ultimately Hegelian. Patrizio and Eugenia suffer from an unhappy consciousness which aspires to be independent from the material world. They are directed to recognize the divine in bodily and natural cycles, and to locate the spiritual within the real. Parallels should thus not be drawn between *Profumo* and the neo-Catholicism of Bourget and Fogazzaro. As he plots a middle path between matter and spirit, Capuana recalls rather Ibsen's quest for a 'third kingdom' in *Emperor and Galilean* (1873) or the fusion of science and religion in Flaubert's *La Tentation de saint Antoine* (1874).

Capuana's quest to reconcile spirit and flesh does not constitute a retreat from post-*Risorgimento* optimism into anti-historical idealism. On the contrary, there are echoes of De Sanctis's demand for an art that exorcizes 'ideali astratti e mistici, ideali tisici e impotenti' and in which 'bisogna dare una più larga parte alle forze animali e naturali dell'uomo, cacciare il "*rêve*" e sostituirvi l'azione, se vogliamo ritornar giovani, formare la volontà, ritemprare la fibra'.[81] Capuana has been accused of neglecting the ethical dimension of De Sanctis's advocacy of realism and of adopting only the insistence that content engender form.[82] *Profumo*, however, dramatizes a freeing of the will through a

rehabilitation of animal and natural forces and a placing of the ideal within the real. If institutionalized positivism inherits the dualism and asceticism of Christianity and thus fosters abulia, Capuana remains optimistic that mind and body may be reconciled. Patrizio's liberation from life-denying ideals presages national regeneration. Capuana's faith in synthesis is reflected in the very structure of the novel: focalization alternates between Patrizio and Eugenia until both perspectives are united at its conclusion. It is only in his post-1890 narrative that Capuana begins to question the possibility of overcoming ideological conditioning and reintegrating the self.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1] There has been a long-standing debate as to the existence of an earlier revision of the novel published in 1885. A recent study by Matteo Durante seems, however, to have conclusively ruled out this possibility (Matteo Durante, 'Tra la prima e la seconda *Giacinta* di Capuana', in *Capuana verista*, pp. 199-220).

[2] From the previously cited preface to the 1889 edition of the novel (Capuana, *Giacinta*, 3rd edn, cit., p. 36).

[3] Allegorical passages already present in the first edition acquire relief through the elimination of naturalistic descriptive passages. Thus, when Giacinta likens the sea, a dark expanse intermittently lit by the rays of a lighthouse, to an enchained monster, we now clearly perceive a cipher for her inability to delve into her own psyche (Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta*, 2nd edn (Catania: Giannotta, 1886), pp. 155-56).

[4] Madrignani, p. 222.

[5] Zola, *Le Roman expérimental*, cit., p. 1188.

[6] Luigi Capuana, 'Emilio Zola', in Luigi Capuana, *Studii* [*sic*] *sulla letteratura contemporanea: seconda serie*, ed. by Paola Azzolini (Naples: Liguori, 1988), pp. 101-09 (p. 108).

[7] Ranzelli and Andrea, in particular, appear to occupy a lower rank in society.

[8] For example, in 1879, *signora* Marulli is in the habit of shutting the five-year-old Giacinta in a 'salotto' (Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 21) which becomes a 'stanzetta mezza buia' in 1886 (Capuana, *Giacinta*, 2nd edn, p. 24).

[9] Capuana, *Giacinta*, 2nd edn, pp. 97-104. Further references to this edition will be given in the text preceded by '1886'.

[10] Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, p. 84. Further references to this edition will be given in the text preceded by '1879'.

[11] See, in particular, Enrico Panzacchi, '*Giacinta* di Luigi Capuana', *Nuova antologia*, 16 (1879), 373-78.

[12] For a fuller analysis of the revised *Giacinta*, see Paul Barnaby, 'Capuana's Giacinta: A Reformed Character?', *The Italianist*, 11 (1991), 70-89.

[13] *Le appassionate* (Catania: Giannotta, 1893) gathers material first published in the collections *Profili di donne* (1877), *Un bacio ed altri racconti* (1881), *Homo!* (1883), *Ribrezzo* (1884), and *Fumando* (1889). Those tales in these collections with a rural, Sicilian setting are brought together in *Le paesane* (1894).

[14] As Lorenza Lorenzi argues in 'La casistica della passione', cit., passim.

[15] See, in particular, Madrignani, pp. 225-36, and Davies, pp. 60-86.

[16] Luigi Capuana, 'Per l'arte', in Luigi Capuana, *Per l'arte*, ed. by Riccardo Scrivano (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1994), pp. 25-49 (p. 29).

[17] Luigi Capuana, 'La crisi letteraria', in Luigi Capuana, *Libri e teatro* (Catania: Giannotta, 1892), pp. III-XXXVII (p. XXVIII).

[18] Luigi Capuana, 'Adorata', in Capuana, *Racconti*, I, 389-405 (p. 390) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 8 June 1884). See also 'Precocità', in *Racconti*, I, 333-42 (first publ. in *La tribuna*, 8 December 1885) and 'Contrasto', in *Racconti*, I, 192-98 (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Un bacio ed altri racconti* (Milan: Ottino, 1881)). *Racconti* contains all the *novelle* in Capuana's collection's *Profili di*

*donne* (1877), *Storia fosca* (1883), *Le appassionate* (1893), *Le paesane* (1894), *Il decameroncino* (1901), *Delitto ideale* (1902), *Coscienze* (1905), *Un vampiro* (1907), and *La voluttà di creare* (1911).

[19] See Luigi Capuana, 'Storia fosca', in *Racconti*, I, 173-85 (first publ. in *Rivista nuova di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 30 March 1880).

[20] Luigi Capuana, 'Evoluzione', in *Racconti*, I, 406-26 (p. 406) (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Homo!* (Milan: Brigola, 1883)).

[21] Luigi Capuana, 'Gelosia', in *Racconti*, I, 343-52 (p. 346 and p. 345) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 1 July 1883).

[22] Capuana, 'Adorata', cit., p. 390, p. 394 and p. 399.

[23] See Luigi Capuana, 'Anime in pena', in *Racconti*, I, 475-99 (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 18-25 November 1883).

[24] Capuana, 'Contrasto', cit., p. 194.

[25] The idyll of 'Gelosia' is a 'sogno diventato realtà' (Capuana, 'Gelosia', cit., p. 343).

[26] The attention rightly bestowed upon such pieces as 'Ribrezzo' and 'Tortura' has led to a presentation of *Le appassionate* as a series of objective case-studies of feminine psychopathology. Indeed, it is generally assumed that 'appassionate' qualifies 'donne' rather than 'novelle'. One might observe, however, that its sister-volume *Le paesane* features few female protagonists.

[27] Storti Abate, p. 89.

[28] Ibid., p. 93. See also Madrignani, pp. 187-89, and Cavalli Pasini, p. 46.

[29] Luigi Capuana, 'Povero dottore!', in *Racconti*, I, 279-96 (p. 282) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 8 October 1882).

[30] Luigi Capuana, 'Mostruosità', in *Racconti*, I, 375-88 (p. 378) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 24 July 1881).

[31] Ibid., p. 378 and p. 376.

[32] Significantly, Giovanni is an architect, a half-way house between the solid professionals -- lawyers, doctors, engineers -- who populate most of *Le appassionate* and the artist-hero of the *fin de siècle*.

[33] Luigi Capuana, 'Il piccolo archivio', in *Racconti*, I, 362-74 (p. 372) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 5 July 1885).

[34] Luigi Capuana, 'Il muletto del dottore', in *Racconti*, II (1974), 85-97 (p. 89) (first publ. in *Nuova antologia*, 27 (1890)).

[35] Ibid., p. 94.

[36] Ibid., p. 91.

[37] Ibid., p. 96.

[38] Which goes far beyond the jocular analysis of the mule's genetic inheritance with which Capuana ironically discharges his duties as a naturalist *novelliere* at the beginning of the tale.

[39] Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 106.

[40] Vetro, p. 235. See also Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 12.

[41] Vetro, p. 136 and Marchese, p 95. It is Vetro who instigates this somewhat nationalistic line of Capuana criticism. He is followed, in particular, by Lucio D'Ambra who pronounces *Profumo* Capuana's masterpiece because of its success in capturing regional characteristics (D'Ambra, Introduction to Capuana, *Le più belle novelle*, cit., p. XXI) and Caccia who judges that a 'sfondo felice' compensates for the habitual, tiresome 'caso d'isterismo' (Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 2907). There are less generous appraisals of the novel. For Raya, Capuana entirely fails to overcome his 'compiacenza del caso patologico' and enthusiasm for the physiological models of French naturalism (Gino Raya, *Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Ciranna, 1966) p. 13). Giulio Cattaneo, meanwhile, laments both the persistence of the pathological case and Capuana's concessions to a spiritualistic zeitgeist which collectively render the novel ideologically incoherent (Giulio Cattaneo, 'Prosatori e critici dalla Scapigliatura al verismo', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno, 9 vols (Milan: Garzanti, 1966-69), VIII (1968), 269-488 (p. 368)).

[42] Madrignani, pp. 246-83.

[43] Storti Abate, pp. 117-26, Cappello, pp. 95-104, and Davies, pp. 86-98.

[44] Scalia, p. 244.

[45] Traversa, pp. 89-100.

[46] Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 42.

[47] Ibid., p. 41. Villa nonetheless departs from Madrignani in asserting that the emission of scent is 'al di fuori di qualsiasi accertamento scientifico' (ibid., p. 37) and in suggesting that it derives from a local superstition. Capuana's precise source in J. Ochorowitz's *De la suggestion mentale* has, however, been identified in Hilda L. Norman, 'The Scientific and the Pseudo-Scientific in the Works of Luigi Capuana', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, 53 (1938), 869-85 (p. 880).

[48] Paola Azzolini, 'Un idillio naturalista: *Profumo* di Luigi Capuana', *Lettere italiane*, 36 (1984), 319-38 (p. 334).

[49] Ibid., p. 335.

[50] Ibid., p. 338. This reading of the novel's conclusion has recently been adopted in Cappello, p. 102. One may feel that other followers of Madrignani's thesis are inconsistent in praising the proto-Freudian portrayal of an Oedipal situation and censuring the cathartic speech-act by which it is transcended.

[51] *Profumo* first appears in *Nuova antologia*, 28-30 (1890) and is published in volume-form by Pedone-Lauriel of Palermo in 1892.

[52] Luigi Capuana, *Profumo*, in Capuana, *Giacinta ed altri racconti*, pp. 329-565 (p. 336). This edition is based on the fourth edition of *Profumo*, published in Turin by Roux and Varengo in 1900. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[53] The resemblance between Marzallo and Ispica is stressed by Davies, p. 89, and Traversa, p. 91.

[54] Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 41.

[55] Davies, p. 94 and p. 90.

[56] We learn that Patrizio and his mother have previously dwelled in a converted monastery.

[57] Luigi Capuana, 'Intus', in Luigi Capuana, *Semiritmi*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Naples: Guida, 1972), pp. 72-74. This volume is too frequently dismissed as a series of playful variation on and parodies of contemporary poetic themes and forms. There is much evidence here that Capuana is more sensitive than has been allowed to the spiritual crises of a period in which the influence of positivism is waning.

[58] The cause of death is unstated.

[59] The early death of Patrizio's father and the oppressive relationship with his mother Geltrude (i.e. 'Gertrude') suggest, of course, a further literary allusion. A parallel is drawn between the vacillating Patrizio and Hamlet.

[60] At precisely the moment when Eugenia's nerves are placed under the microscope, Capuana stresses, as he does in *Le appassionate*, the capacity of the male for neurosis. There is heavy irony when the jabbering Patrizio interrupts his lurid premonitions of doom to confide in Mola his reluctance to appraise Eugenia of her condition given the propensity of the feminine imagination to exaggerate.

[61] Mola's very name may suggest his role with its echoes of 'molla' and 'mollare'. One thinks, in particular, of the phrase 'far scattare la molla'.

[62] Which points to Mola's role as surrogate father.

[63] The fictional child is, of course, also a transparent metaphor for the 'vita nuova' that Eugenia, closer, as a woman, to the natural and instinctive, may nurture.

[64] Capuana reveals an interest in a psychopathological approach to religious fervour in a review of Ermete Rossi's *Psicopatia cristiana* in *La tavola ronda*, 26 June 1892 (repr. as 'Psicopatia cristiana', in Capuana, *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, pp. 167-76).

[65] They inherit their father's healthy diffuseness and garrulity.

[66] Scarano, Introduction to Scarano and others, *Novelliere impenitente*, cit., p. 20.

[67] The extraordinary subterfuge by which Mola persuades Eugenia that she is pregnant might be seen as a further example of the arbitrary act of violence recommended by the Mayor. This would again underline the fundamental unity of purpose of the Marzallesi.

[68] Sidetracked by the 'folkloric' spectacle of the flagellants, recent critics have failed to attach any significance to the feast that they are celebrating.

[69] Geltrude's fatal illness is evidently symbolic, her paralysis a cipher for the mortifying strictures of her creed, her inability to speak a pointer to the risk of an irrevocable breakdown in communication.

[70] Unlike Giacinta who freely confides in the fallen Marietta. Few of Capuana's protagonists are reluctant to fraternize with the serving classes.

[71] It may be relevant that Eugenia's name etymologically signifies 'noblewoman'.

[72] So crudely allegorical is 'la zia Vita' that one can only suppose that previous critics have opted to wrap her in a discreet silence.

[73] See, in particular, Madrignani, p. 267, and Davies, p. 95.

[74] Quoted by Capuana in a letter to De Roberto dated 20 December 1891 (publ. in Sarah Zappulla Muscarà, *Capuana e De Roberto* (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 1984), pp. 336-37 (p. 337)).

[75] Ruggiero courts Eugenia from beneath the window which has become a symbol for the non-communication between husband and wife. Ruggiero's passion may, however, also bear a positive subtext. Urged by Eugenia, his promise to leave his peasant lover Santa foreshadows Patrizio's abandonment, in the novel's closing chapters, of a mother habitually addressed as 'santa mia' (Capuana, *Profumo*, cit., p. 376). The promise also prefigures the cathartic word that Eugenia eventually extracts from Patrizio.

[76] Davies, p. 90.

[77] Mola too hints that Patrizio is in danger of losing Eugenia (Capuana, *Profumo*, cit., pp. 549-50). Critics who regard the doctor's final intervention as improbably decisive fail to observe that it is this warning as much as Mola's psychological analysis which spurs Patrizio to action.

[78] 'Merlo', of course, has the secondary meaning of 'simpleton'.

[79] This sequence may polemically echo the conclusion to Tolstoy's novella *Family Happiness* (1859). There too a storm reunites estranged marital partners. In Tolstoy's tale, however, the couple's new start is based on the recognition that the sensual love of their early marriage cannot be revived. Capuana, conversely, portrays a rebirth of instinctive sexuality. There are further traces of an anti-Tolstoyan polemic in *Rassegnazione*, where Dario's puritanical distaste for non-reproductive sex echoes *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889).

[80] One thinks, in particular, of 'Mungià' where a blind musician disturbs the joyful fecundity of a harvest festival with his Christian dirges and nostalgically recalls his participation in pagan wedding rituals as a sighted youth.

[81] Francesco De Sanctis, 'Zola e *L'Assommoir*', in De Sanctis, *Saggi critici*, III, 277-99 (p. 290 and pp. 298-99).

[82] Madrignani argues that Capuana never follows De Sanctis in seeing realism as a means of saving 'l'arte dell'Italia decaduta riportandola alle "fresche aure di una realtà sana e robusta"' (Madrignani, p. 44). The signs of decadence that De Sanctis attributes to religious hypocrisy, academic habits, and political cynicism, the 'positivist' Capuana attributes to racial factors (ibid., pp. 74-76). Marzot too judges Capuana to be ignorant of the profound historical and cultural reasons which induce De Sanctis to embrace realism (Marzot, p. 284).

# CHAPTER III

## *La sfinge*: An Analysis of Ideological Crisis

### 1. *Critical Approaches to 'La sfinge'*

Where critics have neglected the role of symbol and allegory in *Profumo*, they have unanimously recognized that both are central to Capuana's third novel, *La sfinge* (1895). The very title derives from the symbolist painting of the Sphinx which the writer-hero Giorgio Montani identifies with his lover Fulvia. The foregrounding of the Sphinx-symbol has, however, garnered widely contrasting critical responses. For some, it is a modish element grafted upon a naturalist case-study. For others, it signals a renunciation of *verismo* and an espousal of the decadent aesthetic professed by Montani. The most recent commentators have assigned it an ironic function, permitting Capuana to debunk decadent ideology from a staunchly *verista* perspective. All nonetheless concur that *La sfinge* represents a vital gauge of Capuana's critical reception of post-naturalist literary ideals and first raises the questions which dominate critical discussion of his later narrative and theoretical writings. Confronted with decadentism, symbolism, *psychologisme*, and the Russian novel, does Capuana remain a doctrinaire *verista*? Does he pioneer a proto-Croceian scepticism towards schools and ideologies? Is he reduced to a disorientated *possibilismo*? Or does he embrace the new ideals?

In our study, we shall first examine earlier attempts to read *La sfinge* as a measure of Capuana's response to a changing cultural context. We shall then consider how far these tally with Capuana's own critical writings of the years dividing *Profumo* and *La sfinge*. We shall thirdly assess the relationship between Capuana's criticism and his experimental shorter fiction of the early 1890s. As we turn finally to the novel itself, what we shall discover is neither an incoherent attempt to embrace new ideals nor a metaliterary parody of the decadent novel but a lucid critique of

the repressive ideologies of both decadentism and positivism. We shall detect significant thematic continuity with *Profumo* as Capuana again seeks to liberate the feminine and instinctive from institutional stigma. We shall see, however, that, in a changing cultural and political climate, his faith in the synthesis imaged in *Profumo* is shaken. This little-studied text is less a response to literary fashion than to the crisis of the Unitary state.

* * * *

Early commentators view *La sfinge* as the naturalist case-study of a pathological passion. Croce (1905) perceives a portrayal of obsessive jealousy marred by Capuana's habitual taste for scientific curiosities. He detects in the telepathic episode on which the novel concludes an aridly positivist approach to the paranormal.[1] Tonelli (1928) praises an 'analisi finissima' of a violent passion which, nonetheless, forsakes the brutalities of naturalist physiology for the 'spiritual' probing of Bourget.[2] As they plot a psychological case history, some critics, however, display a striking reluctance to consider Capuana outwith naturalist parameters. Pirandello (1897), for example, criticizes a naturalist indulgence in the representation of the degenerate and pathological. Yet he glosses Montani's degeneracy in terms which suggest a wry critique of symbolism rather than the naturalist analysis of an exceptional case. Accustomed to scrutinizing his over-complicated characters, Montani no longer comprehends 'le cose piú semplici' and sees in Fulvia, 'la meno complicata delle creature del suo sesso', the embodiment of the Sphinx.[3] In a tiresome 'commedia prestabilita' of misunderstanding, Fulvia cannot resist 'il malsano piacere di mostrarsi a lui l'opposto di quella che è realmente'. Yet Pirandello appears to detect no element of cultural criticism in this portrait of an artist befuddled by symbolizing zeal.

A similar *parti pris* leads Gian Pietro Lucini (1897) to argue that Capuana introduces the modish Sphinx-symbol in a vain attempt to bolster a 'naturalismo psicologico presto a morire'.[4] The symbol represents 'la vita umana, la fuggevole sostanza femminile, anche

l'amore', but the novel's essentially naturalistic character is revealed by its 'apriorismo pseudo scientifico', its relentlessly destructive 'analisi', and, in particular, its rigid pessimism. For Lucini, Capuana is convinced of the mutual impenetrability of human psyches and advocates a Schopenhauerian philosophy: 'Poi che ognuno è infelice e durante la sua esistenza incontra rare oasi di quiete e di pace, in quell'oasi stesse [*sic*], nella prima anzi per avventura trovata, male assicurandosi alla fede che sempre appare un inganno, sopprimersi.'[5] Yet naturalist psychology is clearly predicated upon the *penetrability* of the alien psyche. Equally, an ideological suicide is incompatible with a deterministic model of human behaviour. Lucini's *précis* suggests, in fact, a canonically decadent text.

More recent critics have followed Lucini in seeing the novel's symbolism as a superficial concession to a changing literary climate. For Madrignani (1970), *La sfinge* betrays the 'mestiere' of an increasingly impecunious author. A banal study of jealousy is decked with fashionable 'effetti telepatici' and decadent touches.[6] Villa (1974) echoes Madrignani's comments. Transferring a violent passion into a bourgeois milieu, Capuana seeks to enrich his analysis with a prophetic symbol of 'la passione per la donna che affascina, tormenta e sottilmente uccide'.[7] His concrete muse and reliance on the techniques of positivist observation combine, however, to render the symbol a superficial 'oggetto esterno'.

Some critics, however, perceive in *La sfinge* an authentic tension between positivist and idealist psychology. For Davies (1979), Montani's passion originates naturalistically in the repression of instinctive material, but there is no logic to its gradual intensification. Fits of jealousy become an inexplicable visitation as Capuana fluctuates between the plotting of psychological cause-and-effect and allusions to an obscure fatality. In Davies's analysis, Montani's jealousy is ultimately indecipherable in terms of positivist science. She argues that psychological coherence is further undermined by the rehabilitation of the will. Davies shares Lucini's conviction that Montani's death is a Schopenhauerian assertion of the individual will but rightly sees

that an ideological suicide is fundamentally anti-naturalist. For Davies, however, the neurotically jealous Montani cannot convincingly embody an elitist ideal, and we must therefore remain uncertain whether the novel depicts a glorious sensibility or a pathological case. Davies finds Fulvia equally incoherent as she alternates between timid bourgeoise and Sphinx. Had Capuana fully adopted Montani's perspective, we might safely conclude that the enigmatic temptress exists only in his mind. Montani, however, is externally analysed, and the symbol sits ill against a naturalistic backdrop. For Davies, Capuana appears caught between lofty idealism and debunking realism.[8]

Marchese (1964) too perceives a conflict of psychological models. Capuana is torn between physiological naturalism and the refined *pyschologisme* of Bourget, between plotting pathological symptoms and celebrating Montani's sensitivity and psychic insight. So incoherent is Montani that, for Marchese, his suicide is incomprehensible. Capuana merely appears determined to expose the deadly influence of woman on artistic life and hound his protagonist to death. Yet, in Marchese's reading, Fulvia rebels against 'il ruolo di Sfinge' forced upon her both 'dalla mente esaltata di Giorgio' and 'dalla volontà del Capuana di dimostrare una tesi'.[9] She is, as for Pirandello, a 'donna alla buona' but in defiance of an author who shares his hero's exaltation.

Where Davies and Marchese perceive an imperfect marriage of positivism and idealism, other critics have seen a complete renunciation of *verista* poetics. One of the earliest commentators, Henry B. Fuller (1897), judges *La sfinge* 'a juvenile effort lately resurrected, or else a deliberate imitation of D'Annunzio by one who has completed the delivery of his own message'.[10] More recently, Ettore Caccia argues that the novel's 'simbologia un po' falsa' demands to be read in a decadent key.[11] With its *femme fatale*, abulic artist, and allegorical painting, with its D'Annunzian phraseology and modish occultism, he judges *La sfinge* a veritable compendium of *fin de siècle* bad taste.

Ultimately each of the critics cited thus far posits a writer out of step with his times. They present a Capuana who clings to anachronistic naturalism, fails to reconcile positivist poetics with idealist subject-matter, or joins the decadent bandwagon. Only Annamaria Pagliaro (1988), in the most recent discussion of *La sfinge*, argues that Capuana offers a lucid critique of a post-*verista* literary context. She insists that to read the novel as a study of jealousy is to overlook the significance of Montani's role as writer and exponent of the decadent 'ambiente culturale romano di fine secolo'.[12] For Pagliaro, Montani's passion is conceived as an artistic *experiment* The dramatist wishes to suffer the extreme emotions which he has hitherto only portrayed and thereby verify his powers of observation and conjecture. Subjective experience will authenticate his art. Montani's affair with Fulvia is a work of the creative imagination, 'una macchinazione della mente alterata del protagonista'.[13] As he takes a decadent pride in testing an exceptional sensibility, his obsessive jealousy must, in Pagliaro's analysis, be read as the self-conscious exploration of acute sensations. Montani fails to grasp, however, that, for Fulvia too, the end of passion is art. Hoping to inspire his masterpiece and believing art 'una trasposizione più sofisticata della semplice esistenza quotidiana', she mimics Montani's enigmatic heroines.[14] When Fulvia confesses to role-playing, Montani is, in Pagliaro's reading, confronted with the realization that his creations have no basis in reality. Recognition of artistic failure drives him to suicide.

For Pagliaro, Montani's *mea culpa* reflects Capuana's judgment of decadentism. In his critical writings of the 1890s, she detects a fear that 'l'eccessiva riflessione moderna e un esagerato gusto per le rarità' preclude the representation of living passions, the very stuff of art.[15] She sees, in his later fiction, an extension of his anti-decadent polemic. Far from embracing new ideals, he remains a lucid chronicler, portraying, in *La sfinge*, an artist torn between conflicting *verista* and decadent impulses. He likewise keeps faith with the impersonal method. Indeed, for Pagliaro, *La sfinge*'s greatest success is in its refinement of *verista* narrative technique. Through an innovative process of 'sdoppiamento', a

self-conscious hero is made to analyse himself.[16] Fully internalized analysis becomes part of the psychological drama. With his continued reliance on *verista* forms, Capuana seeks to realize the gradualist programme outlined in the prefaces of *I Malavoglia* and *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879). Having honed his skills on the proletariat, Capuana dissects the frustrated ideals of the higher orders. Ultimately, however, in Pagliaro's analysis, *verista* techniques throw his subject into too stark a relief. Against 'uno sfondo realista', decadentism seems a superficially observed whim.[17] Capuana's critique of an ideology thus appears simplistic.

Pagliaro's study of *La sfinge* is invaluable in stressing that Capuana engages critically with a changing cultural context. It raises, however, a number of questions. Pagliaro observes that Montani's poetics retains aspects of *verismo*. He shares Capuana's faith in the impersonal technique and considers art 'la realtà rappresentata in forma organica'.[18] Yet, dissatisfied with observation or imaginative 'immedesimazione', he seeks subjective confirmation of his insights. If experimentation upon one's sensibility is quintessentially decadent, Montani is driven by the realist's thirst for authenticity. Authenticity, however, is irrevocably compromised as obsessive self-observation rapidly evolves into the celebration of an exquisite sensibility and the improvisation of artificial emotional states. If intended as a critique of decadentism, this must strike us as confused. No true decadent would share Montani's naive horror of artifice and of inauthenticity. Does Capuana, then, misunderstand decadentism, viewing it as simply an attempt to refine *verista* technique through self-analysis? Or does he portray a writer caught between conflicting literary impulses, who, increasingly wary of positivist objectivity, is driven unconsciously to mimic the subjective conceits of decadentism? If so, who precisely is Capuana's model?

Pagliaro's analysis of Capuana's formal innovations is equally problematic. The technique of 'sdoppiamento' whereby the protagonist becomes the detached observer of his own psyche

resembles Bourget's *dédoublement*, formal mainstay of the *psychologiste* and early decadent novel. If the technique is an organic extension of *verismo*, has Capuana simply been pre-empted? Finally, if the canonical decadent hero is the target of both subjective and authorial irony, is inextricably bound to the ideal, and sees demiurgic ambitions undermined by neurosis and abulia, how far does Capuana's critique of a cultural milieu differ from that of his perceived targets?

In order to address these questions, we must first examine Capuana's critical writings of the years immediately preceding the composition of *La sfinge* and seek to gauge his reception of decadentism and other post-positivist literary movements. We shall then consider how far Capuana's often satirical shorter fiction of the same period may, as Pagliaro suggests, be read as an extension of his literary criticism.

## 2. *Capuana's Critical Reception of Post-Naturalist Literature 1885-94*

Pagliaro's view of Capuana as a staunch public opponent of decadentism is, by no means, unanimously shared. There are broadly four approaches to Capuana's later critical writings. Some early commentators applaud an unwavering defence of concrete DeSanctisian principles. Others perceive an equally intransigent militant naturalism. More recent critics detect either an 'involuzione' from an engaged naturalism to a sparer realist aesthetic or the disorientation of a critic who has outlived his historical function.

For most early commentators, Capuana's aesthetics alter little throughout his critical career. For Croceians, he derives from De Sanctis a loathing for the abstract and cerebral, hostility to moral or civic agendas, scepticism toward schools or programmes, and tolerance of all form-engendering content. He thus rigorously opposes the vapid subjectivity of decadentism.[19] Others follow Russo in judging Capuana an intractable ideologue who parrots

Zola's condemnation of decadent art.[20] Those few pre-war commentators who reject a static view of Capuana's critical career paint instead a fickle trend-follower.[21]

While each of these views has found recent defenders,[22] most post-war critics plot an 'involuzione' from the elaboration of *verista* poetics in the *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea* (1880-82) to a less engaged position where Capuana seeks to dissociate himself from the perceived excesses of naturalism and to reconcile *verista* form with new literary ideals. Opinions differ, however, as to the extent and significance of a process which commences with *Per l'arte* (1885) and culminates in *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei* (1898). For Trombatore, among the first to chart Capuana's disengagement the critic's continued advocacy of the impersonal technique and taste for the concrete permit him to form a healthy bulwark against *fine secolo* subjectivism.[23] Trombatore's view dominates Capuana criticism of the 1950s and 1960s, and is furthest developed by Roberto Bigazzi (1968) for whom Capuana's continued faith in impersonality reflects a faith in the real and in the objective value of his observations. Increasingly detached from the historical moment, he reflects, for Bigazzi, the complacency of a bourgeoisie reluctant to confront cultural stimuli which question the assumptions of the *Risorgimento*. By championing the impersonal ideal, he nonetheless nurtures a healthy realist tradition.[24]

Madrignani (1970) first elaborates a harsher view of the later critical writings. He argues that Capuana loses sight of the nexus linking his narrative theory to the optimistic positivism of the post-*Risorgimento* bourgeoisie in its 'conservative-progressive' phase. As positivism is challenged, and Capuana's class lapses into reactionary nationalism, he essays an ideologically neutral aesthetics but merely abdicates his historical 'function'. His unity of taste and thought are gradually undermined. If, in major critical pronouncements, he clings tautologically to *verista* principles, individual judgments reveal disorientation in a changed climate of taste.[25]

Madrignani's analysis has informed most recent criticism. For Ghidetti (1972), the 'spregiudicatezza' lauded by the Croceians is merely the bewilderment of a 'cronista disincantato che ostenta una punta di mondano scetticismo'.[26] For Storti Abate (1989), Capuana arrives at a total critical 'disimpegno' in an effort to reduce *verismo* to a formal methodology bereft of cognitive value.[27] Eager to avoid marginalization, he attempts to comprehend the success of post-positivist literary movements using quintessentially positivistic critical principles. Davies (1979) sees a critical suspension of disbelief whereby Capuana disclaims naturalist ideology, eschews controversy, and professes a readiness to accept all content. Yet he cannot ultimately sanction any change in the narrative procedures employed to convey the new content. For Davies, his insistence on impersonality betrays an anachronistic faith in the knowability of the real and the transparency of language.[28]

If we turn to *Libri e teatro* (1892), the collection which gathers Capuana's critical essays of the late 1880s and early 1890s, we find much to suggest the downgrading of critical activity perceived by post-Madrignani critics. Where his previous volumes, *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*, *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea*, and *Per l'arte*, lay claim to comprehensiveness, the very title implies the jottings of an occasional *cronista*. The choice of texts too suggests disengagement. For a theorist of the novel, Capuana shows a marked reluctance to confront those narrators who have emerged in the years since *Per l'arte*: Fogazzaro, Serao, Bourget, Huysmans, Maupassant, the Russians. If *Il piacere* (1889) is analysed at length, only three of the remaining eleven pieces cover fiction. In contrast, the journalists Armand de Pontmartin and Petruccelli della Gattina inspire lengthy appreciations. Articles on Becque and Maeterlinck suggest a livelier attention to developments in the theatre.[29] Given, however, that a reprint of the preface to *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo* comprises a third of the volume, it represents an unimpressive balance-sheet for seven years of critical activity. The question which confronts the reader of *Libri e teatro* is whether Capuana's relative silence reflects confidence that the

'battaglie veristiche' are won or, as Madrignani suggests, growing disorientation and a loss of faith in positivist aesthetics.

There are two pieces collected in *Libri e teatro* where Capuana unquestionably seeks to distance himself from French naturalism. The first is a riposte to the manifesto which prefaces Édouard Rod's *Trois coeurs* (1890). In this, for Capuana, Rod confuses 'il concetto che è materia d'arte' with art itself.[30] The externality and materialism which Rod censures in naturalism are not inherent to its methodology but derive from the individual philosophy and temperament of its exponents and the primitive subject-matter on which they have hitherto honed their skills. The true innovation of Flaubert, Zola, and the Goncourts consists in the impersonal form of their narrative. Capuana thus posits no link between naturalistic technique and a given ideology or view of the psyche. If this, however, is an 'involuzione', it is one inscribed in Capuana's *verismo* from the outset. An ascent to more elevated spheres is already envisaged in his review of *Les Frères Zemganno* (1879), external observation rejected for 'immedesimazione' in his piece on *La vita dei campi* (1880), rigid determinism and an *engagé* naturalism censured in his critique of *Nana* (1882). More significant than a long-prefigured aspiration to ideological neutrality is Capuana's zeal in colluding with modish condemnations of naturalist excesses. The once vaunted Flaubert and the Goncourts are now deemed as dogmatically materialistic as Zola.

For Capuana, however, materialism does not constitute the greatest threat. In his critique of Rod's *intuitivisme*, he joins the debate between the advocates of the *roman objectif* and the *roman d'analyse*. Rod urges the substitution of concrete data with universal symbols and rejects external observation in favour of a study of the inner microcosm. Only through self-knowledge can the novelist know others. Capuana, however, argues that true narrative insight consists in combining internal and external observation. Rod risks condoning rampant subjectivism and resurrecting the type. His *intuitiviste* manifesto unwittingly supplies 'un'esattissima diagnosi della malattia che comincia ad

affliggere il romanzo francese e ne minaccia la vita'.[31] In Rod's novels, analysis so outweighs imagination that Capuana hesitates to term them works of art. The reader of *La sfinge* must perceive parallels between Rod's artistic programme and that of Giorgio Montani who rejects naturalist observation for the authenticity of personal experience. The critique of *Trois coeurs* implies that Montani's ideal of 'l'arte vissuta' is not, as Pagliaro suggests, ultimately compatible with *verista* poetics but leads inevitably to artifice, subjectivity, and an excess of analytical zeal.

In the essay 'Teatro libero', Capuana again reveals a readiness to distance himself from an excessively materialistic naturalism alongside a practical reluctance to countenance a post-positivist aesthetic. This is the most combative piece of the volume and represents Capuana's first systematic attempt to engage with the new 'ismi'. He first argues that the debate between naturalists, spiritualists, symbolists, decadents, and *psychologistes* is currently confined to France. Italian writers, conversely, increasingly forsake theory for a non-programmatic 'sincerità'.[32] Only one French school has influenced the Italian novel for 'quasi tutti siamo stati o siamo [...] un po' naturalisti (noi diciamo veristi)'. Yet it is generally agreed that the 'valore di questa formola' consists solely in formal acquisitions which have become an integral component of contemporary writing.[33] A naive minority alone seeks in decadentism 'la rivelazione del Verbo dell'arte avvenire' or rather 'il pretesto di plagi e rifritture che possano passare in Italia per cose nove di zecca'.[34] Reducing the historical function of *verismo*/naturalism to an inevitable stage in the evolution of a literary genre, Capuana peers above the fray and dismisses *dannunzianesimo* as a derivative fad.

The essay continues with a survey of recent French drama. Capuana first seeks to establish his equanimity by condemning, in Chirac's scabrous monologues, the worst excesses of naturalist theatre. One may be a naturalist 'senza dover mostrarsi ineducati'.[35] If Capuana is again ready to condone a reaction against the perceived materialism of French naturalism, the exponents of new ideals are nevertheless condemned in terms

familiar from Capuana's earliest criticism. Capuana provides straight-faced summaries of pieces by Maurice, Quillard, and Rachilde which betray amusement at the puerile transparency of their symbols. Maeterlinck, however, drives Capuana to articulate his quarrel with symbolism. Maeterlinck seeks to replace passion, the stuff of drama, with indefinite sensations. Refusing to see in *Les Aveugles* (1890) the allegorical representation of a contemporary spiritual crisis, Capuana identifies Maeterlinck's sole aim as the evocation of the terrors of the unknown. Maeterlinck thus confuses drama with the lyric. Before seeking a chimerical new formula, the symbolists might forego their 'scherzi infantili' and examine whether, shorn of redundant conventions, the old formula might be the sole compatible with the passionate nature of the genre.[36] Like Rod's *intuitivisme*, symbolism merely revives the universal type and fosters subjective lyricism.

These two pieces, then, appear initially to offer concessions to a growing public distaste for naturalist 'excesses'. Yet, by arguing that the impersonal form of the naturalist/*verista* novel represents a logical step in the development of a genre, Capuana condemns decadent and symbolist art as an anti-historical confusion of genres. His critique of post-positivist aesthetics is most fully developed, however, in Capuana's most important essay of these years, a review of D'Annunzio's *Il piacere.*

This is a sequel to an earlier joint review of *Primo vere* (1879), *Canto novo*, and *Terra vergine* (both 1882), published in *Per l'arte*. There, Capuana had accepted that classical simplicity and spontaneity were beyond the contemporary poet. Undermined by 'l'invadente riflessione',[37] he usurps the techniques of painting and music in order to render the subtlest gradations of neurotic sensations. In D'Annunzio, 'la parola non si contenta dei propri mezzi' and no longer aspires to transparency. Yet Capuana is conquered by an artifice vaunted with 'sincerità ingenua' and plainly inherent to the poet's personality.[38] D'Annunzio's true shortcomings lie in a failure to transcend sensation and to empathize with the few human figures in his landscapes. If he could only grasp that in art life is all, he might have ambitions

beyond 'il far dei versi, anche stupendi'.[39] The fiction of *Terra vergine* is a positive step marred by externality and formal ostentation.

The review of *Il piacere* begins on a self-congratulatory note. In his acknowledgment that 'la Vita' is the sole worthy object of study and in his conversion to fiction, D'Annunzio has evidently heeded Capuana's advice. Yet the conscientious *pittore dal vero* is still betrayed by the 'colorista' and 'stilista'.[40] In virtuoso descriptive passages, a fog of 'lirismo' masks 'la visione schietta e sincera della realtà'. A continued delight in artifice precludes a 'compiuta vitalità artistica'.[41] In his psychological analysis of Andrea Sperelli, meanwhile, D'Annunzio fails to transform plainly autobiographical material into an organism existing 'fuori della personalità dell'artista'.[42] Sperelli lacks relief and pathos; we detect none of the 'tristezza' that the author claims to have felt in studying his subject.[43] D'Annunzio revels, conversely, in Sperelli's (and, by implication, his own) exacerbated sensuality and refined perversion. The author's personality is all-pervasive. Here 'sincerity' of artifice is no excuse. What is permitted in the subjective and moribund poetic genre is inimical to the novel.

Yet Capuana's real quarrel appears to lie less with the incomplete transfiguration of content into form than with the content itself. We must be struck by the concession that 'gli stessi difetti arrivano a parere talmente connaturali all'indole dell'artista e *al soggetto da lui preso a trattare*, che ne risulta un particolar gusto [my italics]'.[44] Capuana's insistence on bathos and an objectively rendered 'furore erotico' implies hostility to the decadent type.[45] In detached self-observation and the *esprit d'analyse*, he sees mere authorial projection.

Ultimately one must wonder what precisely Capuana demands of D'Annunzio. Touching briefly upon *San Pantaleone* (1886), he remarks that D'Annunzio sporadically achieves a simplicity and naïvety 'che però stentano a parer sincere'.[46] His quest for linguistic transparency appears excessively imitative of Verga and is periodically undermined by a characteristically exotic

image. The emulation of *verista* models can only lead an 'ingenuously' artificial author to skillful pastiche. D'Annunzio must, somehow, harness innate linguistic preciosity, sensuality, and psychological intricacy to an impersonal technique. Yet, as Capuana ultimately dismisses D'Annunzio's view of the psyche as a manifestation of authorial personality, can the younger writer objectivize his own vision other than by ironizing it? Might this be the task that Capuana sets himself in *La sfinge*? The review of *Il piacere* suggests that *verista* techniques may be consciously exploited to cast an ironic perspective upon Montani's decadent sensibility

This piece offers little evidence of neo-idealist 'involuzione'. Capuana does not salvage impersonality from the wreck of positivism but remains convinced of both the potential transparency of language and the possibility of a 'visione schietta e sincera della realtà'. His criticism of D'Annunzio is only superficially formal. Charges of *autobiografismo*, psychological over-refinement, and subjective lyricism mask hostility to a decadent critique of positivist objectivity and a reluctance to grant the decadent hero historical validity.

Throughout *Libri e teatro*, Capuana proclaims his openness to all possible content but uses impersonality as a gauge to disallow the innovations of the symbolists and decadents. By refusing to link *verista* form with a faith in the knowability of reality and the transparency of language, he denies younger writers an autonomous aesthetic.[47] Their work is repeatedly censured for its subjectivity, ostentatious analysis, and indebtedness to foreign models.

Far from renouncing *verismo* in *Libri e teatro*, Capuana strives to persuade us that its formal innovations have become an integral part of the novel. If, moreover, he increasingly demands 'sincerità' and 'vita' before all else, he still views the objective observation of contemporary reality as indispensable to an impersonal perspective. Yet, in Capuana's very eagerness to diagnose formal heresy rather than new spiritual content, we may

detect an incipient disquiet. This is intermittently exposed in references to the 'malattia che comincia ad affliggere il romanzo francese e ne minaccia la vita' and the 'scherzi infantili' of the symbolists. We sense a fear that *verista* achievements may be eroded by new theories of cognition and psychology, and by the growing indifference of the reading public. We are struck by Capuana's persistently defensive stance. He conspicuously struggles to cite examples in support of his assertion that *verismo* is ready to climb the social ladder. Where each step of Capuana's development of a *verista* aesthetics has hitherto stemmed from an encounter with a specific text, here he anticipates an unrealized evolution. When his rhetoric obliges him to cite healthy narrative models, he invariably falls back on *La vita dei campi* and *I Malavoglia*.[48] Ultimately, one cannot escape the impression that the downgrading of Capuana's critical activity reveals doubts as to the future development of the novel.

* * * *

The three years between *Libri e teatro* and *La sfinge* see no intensification of Capuana's critical activity. The few articles which he publishes, however, suggest that his attention is, once again, exclusively focused upon the novel. Two pieces are of particular significance. The first and most ambitious is devoted to D'Annunzio's *Giovanni Episcopo* (1891) and *L'innocente* (1892). Capuana detects two faults in the former: the paralysing influence of Dostoevsky and an excess of analysis. Dostoevsky and his compatriots are a dangerous model in two respects. Firstly, the Italian reader, a member of a more sceptical, reflective race, cannot identify with their heroes, 'nevrotici esaltati' in revolt against injustices 'che non trovano spiegazione nel loro troppo semplice cervello'.[49] To import 'la conturbata sentimentalità russa' is to deprive the Italian novel of its national character and role as mirror of society. Secondly, the Russians consider the novel a vehicle of political, religious, or moral propaganda where in Italy it is now 'qualcosa d'indipendente'. Capuana soon tempers his criticism of the Russian novel, minimizing ideological content in order to reconcile it with the impersonal model of *verismo*. The

insistence, however, that its protagonists and concerns are exclusively local remains constant. The sensual D'Annunzio is particularly vulnerable to Russian influence. A comparison of *Giovanni Episcopo* to *The Meek Girl* or to *Crime and Punishment* reveals it to be 'un'opera d'arte di seconda mano', its hero 'il fantasma di un'altra creatura dell'arte'.[50]

Capuana's second criticism is that the abject Giovanni Episcopo is too rational and self-analytical. This derives not solely from 'nevroticismo russo' but from D'Annunzio's failure to transform meticulous observation into a living organism.[51] Reflection smothers imagination as, incapable of fleshing out his concept, D'Annunzio compels his protagonist to explicate himself. Perhaps D'Annunzio grants Episcopo an improbable degree of lucidity but we again detect Capuana's readiness to interpret the decadent protagonist's self-consciousness as authorial intervention.

Tullio Hermil, protagonist of *L'innocente*, is read in a similar manner. Despite Hermil's self-accusations, we never detect 'il lento lavorìo del rimorso'.[52] He remains 'quasi estraneo a tutto quel che va scrutando nel proprio cuore corrotto', as if it were 'casi altrui'. Indeed his confession appears to afford him 'un nuovo piacere di perversione'. Where we recognize canonical decadent *dédoublement*, Capuana sees 'il cardinale difetto del libro'. D'Annunzio fails to immerse himself in his character and to assume the perspective of a guilty conscience. Again, Capuana cannot accept the *esprit d'analyse* and duality which renders a protagonist extraneous to his own experience.

Capuana's attitude to D'Annunzio, however, remains one of qualified optimism. Renouncing the lyrical subjectivism of *Il piacere*, D'Annunzio has embarked upon a 'ben avviata rinnovazione'.[53] Capuana does not review D'Annunzio's next novel, *Il trionfo della morte* but, in an interview with Ugo Ojetti, declares it one of three 'libri saldi nuovi vitali' of 1894.[54] He nonetheless adds that the *Romanzi della rosa* are too uniform, portraying 'tre facce di una stessa persona'.[55] Throughout, D'Annunzio's analyses are over-subtle, ostentatious, and often superfluous. He has

nonetheless progressed so rapidly in a decade as to appear 'un altro uomo'. Capuana's comments significantly complicate efforts to decide whether the presence of decadent elements in *La sfinge* is parodic or imitative. His critique of D'Annunzio's earlier fiction and imminent *stroncatura* of *Le vergini delle rocce* suggest the former. Yet, thematically, *La sfinge* most closely parallels the generically praised *Il trionfo della morte* . As, however, Capuana fails to gloss this novel's strengths while reiterating familiar criticisms, we are given no guidance as to which of *La sfinge*'s D'Annunzian traits might be intended non-ironically.

Capuana's other significant meditation on the novel in these years is a joint review of Butti's *L'automa* (1892), Neera's *Senio* (1891), and Gualdo's *Decadenza* (1892). Here he again denies the decadent hero historical validity. He acknowledges that the three novelists seek to portray 'un caso tipico dell'attuale esaurimento intellettuale' but, significantly, identifies the 'cardine' of a shared thesis as 'l'influenza deleteria della donna su la volontà e sul carattere dell'uomo nella società contemporanea'.[56] Capuana thus conspicuously plays down the neuroses and abulia which render the decadent hero vulnerable. Yet, if Capuana's précis of a mysogynistic thesis recalls Strindberg's *The Father* (1887) or Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), he evidently sees nothing exclusively contemporary in the analysis of woman's influence. In *L'automa*, Attilio Valda abdicates his will merely because he is typical of 'gli esseri fiacchi e sconclusionati di tutti i luoghi e di tutti i tempi' and, as a type, has no place in art.[57] The heroes of Butti and Neera are greenhorns enslaved by the eternal temptress. Although Bourget's *Cruelle énigme* and *Mensonges* and Daudet's *Sapho* had given this topos a contemporary patina, Capuana's reading deprives these characters of historical immanence. Gualdo's Paolo Renaldi, meanwhile, is deemed a present-day Adolphe, chained to a mistress who, despite her selflessness, inevitably erodes his will. Capuana thus reduces the decadent hero to ageless type or late flower of romanticism.

As, for Davies,[58] Capuana shares Giorgio Montani's view of woman as vampiric enigma, we must stress that Capuana judges

the three novelists' critique of woman excessive. Where the flaccid Valda would succumb to any adventuress, Capuana cannot accept that the moral being of the heroes of Neera and Gualdo should collapse so precipitously. Capuana's own stance is revealed in a review of Tullio Massarani's *L'odissea della donna* (1893). Marvelling at Massarani's chivalry, he remarks:

> Oggi abbiamo quasi tutti, o affettiamo, un'aria punto cavalleresca verso la donna; [...] ne facciamo soggetto di clinica artistica; la studiamo da un lato solo, con durezza che vorrebbe parere scientifica, positiva, quasi ella fosse creatura da farvi esperimenti *in anima vili*, etéra, adultera, strumento insomma di voluttà e di nient'altro. O la guardiamo da mistici [...]; e ripetiamo contro di essa [...] le furibonde maledizioni degli asceti avverso cosí impura fonte di peccato; eccessivi ed ingiusti da positivi e da mistici.[59]

This image of woman censured by positivist and ascetic alike recalls Eugenia's trauma in *Profumo*. It suggests that we should be wary of classifying Fulvia, heroine of *La sfinge*, as a decadent *femme fatale*.

These reviews signal not a growing *possibilismo* but a hardening of Capuana's critical attitude to the decadent novel. The objections familiar from *Libri e teatro* -- that it encourages the typical, the autobiographical, and the non-artistically analytical -- are reinforced by the accusation that it vainly seeks to naturalize foreign models. Turning to Capuana's narrative of the early 1890s, one would surely, therefore, anticipate adherence to the regionalist *verista* model. The critic, after all, consistently demands the clash of unselfconscious passions on clearly demarcated terrain. Yet Capuana's most ambitious fiction between *Profumo* and *La sfinge*, and, indeed, the greater part of his *novelle* of the 1890s explore the isolated psyches of figures who closely resemble the derided decadent hero. As Capuana's narrative production of this period remains essentially unstudied, this represents a largely neglected critical puzzle.[60] We must briefly examine Capuana's most significant *novelle* of the early 1890s in order to gauge whether he seeks to reconcile *verista* technique

with a modishly idealist content or whether, conversely, these represent an extension of his critique of decadentism.

### 3. *Capuana's Experimental Shorter Fiction 1891-93*

The downgrading of Capuana's critical activity in the early 1890s is matched by a similar hiatus in his career as a narrator. While he continues to writes prolifically for a younger audience,[61] he publishes only eight *novelle* for adults between *Profumo* and *La sfinge*. The appearance of the retrospective anthologies *Le appassionate* (1893) and *Le paesane* (1894) partly conceals his silence. In 1896, however, Pirandello anxiously observes that Capuana 'tace ormai da un pezzo'. Similarly, reviewing the 1897 volume *Fausta Bragia*, a relieved Diego De Roberto confesses his fear that Capuana had forsaken 'il cimento letterario'.[62] The retreat from the critical front line signalled by *Libri e teatro* cannot have reassured his peers.

Among subsequent critics, however, Scalia (1952) is alone both in noting and in seeking to explain Capuana's relative silence. He observes that in 1892 Capuana at last acquires a teaching-post and argues that working commitments shackle his muse.[63] Yet Capuana finds time to write voluminously for children, and produces the lengthy essays *La Sicilia e il brigantaggio* (1892) and *La Sicilia nei canti popolari e nella novellistica contemporanea* (1894). We have noted Capuana's critical reluctance to engage with contemporary fiction and observed how advocacy of a refined *verismo* is undermined by an inability to cite a model more contemporary than *I Malavoglia*. One might conjecture that the early 1890s is a period of reassessment and introspection for Capuana the narrator.[64] His small output proves an uncomfortable hybrid of old and new.

Three of the eight tales published in these years, 'Confessione' (1891), 'Fausto Bragia', and 'Ofelia' (both 1893), thematically pre-empt *La sfinge*.[65] 'Confessione' initially appears to be set in the world of *Le appassionate*. Like the protagonists of 'Tortura' and

'Ribrezzo', its heroine, *signora* Martucci, relives, in hallucinatory detail, a guilt-inducing psychosexual experience. Where, for her predecessors, however, guilt arises from involuntary transgression,[66] *signora* Martucci accuses herself of executing a premeditated plan. She betrays her husband 'con uno sforzo della volontà'.[67] Where, in *Profumo*, will and conscience eventually triumph over ideological conditioning, here they emerge, anti-naturalistically, as *primary* motivational factors. Consumed by remorse and faced with her husband's incredulity, *signora* Martucci judges and condemns herself. Where the heroines of *Le appassionate* rebel against a society which wrongfully accuses them, *signora* Martucci rebels against one which refuses to acknowledge her guilt.

She insists that she is no demented *appassionata*. She cannot comprehend the passions of her adulterous friends, judging them 'malate di cervello e di cuore'.[68] She comes, however, to resent 'quell'atonia che la rendeva virtuosa per forza'.[69] As she is drawn to 'il frutto proibito' through 'capriccio' and 'malsana curiosità', we encounter the decadent topos of perverse feminine curiosity.[70] Adultery is coldly conducted as an 'esperimento' upon a suitable guinea pig.[71] The theme of the experiment *in anima vili* is central to Capuana's 1890s production and surely derives from Bourget's *Le Disciple* (1889). There Robert Greslou's seduction of Charlotte de Jussat is a controlled positivistic 'expérience' from which the subject hopes to emerge 'enrichi d'émotions et de souvenirs'.[72] *Signora* Martucci shares Greslou's conviction that superior intelligence exempts her from conventional morality -- 'si era creduta diversa [...] da quelle povere teste scombussolate' -- only to discover that she too is prey to remorse.[73] Equally reminiscent of Bourget is *signora* Martucci's double conscience: she observes the perversion of her 'senso morale' as if 'si fosse trattato di cosa altrui'.[74] The censorious finale too recalls Bourget at his most moralistic. As the heroine leaps from a window, the last word, 'una sconcia parola tra i denti serrati', is left to her husband who, finally disabused, shakes his fist at the void.[75]

Yet there is a tension in 'Confessione' between moralistic condemnation and a more indulgent naturalistic analysis. The evocation of the awakening of curiosity in a lax milieu dwarfs the brief account of the 'experiment'. There are, equally, hints that the heroine simply succumbs to irrational impulses. She wavers between terming her misdemeanour 'un'infamia senza scusa alcuna' and 'un'infamia incredibile'.[76] Again, paradoxically, there are echoes of Bourget, less, however, the mature Catholic moralist than the youthful advocate of 'la pitié et le pardon'. One thinks of the analysis of the influence of the *beau monde* in *Cruelle énigme* (1885) and the heroine's attribution of otherwise inexplicable adultery to 'un être caché en elle'.[77] Perhaps *signora* Martucci's pride manifests itself less in the 'experiment' than in a reluctance to recognize limits to her self-mastery. She may, then, punish herself for her vulnerability to instinct and environment as much as for moral transgression. Again, we may recall Robert Greslou and his suspicion that he genuinely loves Charlotte but is 'un orgueilleux d'idées qui ne voulait pas avoir aimé comme un autre'.[78]

In 'Confessione', then, Capuana appears caught between conflicting approaches to the psyche. While stressing conscience, will, and responsibility, he does not entirely discount the influence of milieu and of irrational, physiological factors.[79] The *novella* nonetheless introduces themes which will dominate Capuana's later works: the experiment *in anima vili*, the flouting of herd morality, the pursuit of an illusory *vera vita*, self-judgment, and self-sentencing. The embryonic *superomismo* visible in *signora* Martucci is more thoroughly explored in 'Fausto Bragia', Capuana's largest-scale piece between *Profumo* and *La sfinge*.

This tale initially appears to intertwine canonically decadent topoi. Convinced that a stifling relationship prevents him from completing his masterpiece, a musician scorns slave morality and seeks freedom through murder. Yet his plan misfires as he accidentally poisons not his lover but her husband and so finds himself inextricably bound to her. On closer inspection, however,

Fausto differs significantly from the decadent hero. It is not desiccating analysis which renders him prematurely 'vecchio' and 'rifinito',[80] but his frustration as a 'difficult' composer who relies upon the charity of philistine patrons. Artistic impotence is explicity linked to the envy which he nurtures for successful mediocrities. Plainly, few decadent heroes suffer economic hardship or, like Fausto, demand material success from the despised bourgeoisie.

Fausto convinces himself that the love of his benefactor's wife will revitalize him and permit him to complete his abandoned masterpiece. Like Andrea Sperelli and Giorgio Aurispa, he appears to seek a crutch for an enfeebled talent. As with D'Annunzio's heroes, the muse becomes scapegoat when impotence becomes inescapable. Yet the tirelessly encouraging *signora* Ghedini clearly inspires no creative passion in Fausto. Illusory artistic stirrings are born of flattered vanity, gratitude, and sensual excitement. Finally aware that he does not reciprocate her passion, Fausto deems her an obstacle to his genius. Yet he neither commits himself exclusively to art nor pursues an authentic muse. He seeks, rather, a lucrative marriage with a besotted pupil whose flattering but unreciprocated adoration again provokes deceptive artistic stirrings. Fausto does not commit the decadent error of idealizing a vulgarian. Instead, passive egotism leads him to confuse passion with pampered self-love. 'Fausto Bragia' is no analysis of the baleful impact of woman on the male will. Its protagonist finally acknowledges that *signora* Ghedini only offends him by reviving abandoned aspirations and forcing him to confront his impotence.

Fausto nonetheless shares with the decadent hero an inability to escape perceived material bondage through will alone. He persuades himself that he is justified in committing a crime to reconquer his liberty. As in 'Confessione', a conviction of moral superiority is shattered, however, by remorse. He perceives 'una mente direttrice' which punishes him for 'aspirazioni sproporzionate coi suoi mezzi e con le facoltà del suo intelletto'. These have left him 'spostato nella societa' and 'impotente in

arte'.[81] Having naturalistically attributed Fausto's embitterment to socio-economic factors, Capuana now traces his downfall to an inability to accept his place in a benign natural order. Fausto is forced to acknowledge 'quell'occulta potenza che regge le cose di questo mondo' which, to a doctor-friend, 'non sembrava scientifico appellare Dio'.[82]

'Fausto Bragia' may be read as a polemical attempt to relocate the decadent hero in the socio-economical context which, for Capuana, the younger writers neglect. The abstract self-analyst thus gives way to an impotent malcontent who employs decadent sexual myths to dignify envy and self-interest. The *novella*'s most striking feature, however, is the anachronism of both setting and form. The impoverished musician and his middlebrow patrons, the fantastical murder, and Fausto's guilty hallucinations appear, despite the contemporary Roman backdrop, a throwback to Hoffmann, Capuana's early idol. Fausto's lyrical sarcasm and the dashing of his ideals against bourgeois indifference evoke both the *Scapigliatura* and Heine whose lyrics Fausto sets to music. It is as if Capuana, eager to prove himself *au courant* with post-positivist psychology and the emergence of the artist-hero, filters partly comprehended new ideals though the readings of his youth.[83] Formally, 'Fausto Bragia' recalls the 1879 *Giacinta* with its rhetorical exposition, zero-focalized analysis, and moral censure. Despite his critical advocacy of Verga's internally focalized impersonality, he reverts, in practice, to the equation of impersonality with ruthless analysis and moral severity.

'Ofelia' thus represents a significant formal departure. A fragmentary, free-associating confession, it pre-empts the homodiegetic *sfoghi* of *Delitto ideale* and *Anime a nudo*.[84] Its painter-hero too appears more contemporary than Fausto Bragia. Unable to convert a sketch of the drowned Ophelia into his masterpiece, Mario Procci seeks 'una figura reale, corrispondente all'ideale'.[85] He locates his ideal, completes the painting, and is engaged to his model. He begins, however, to suspect that she is no artistic soul mate but a vacuous flirt flattered by the attention of a renowned painter. He shares the decadent fear that she

passively moulds herself to his ideal and that he has fallen for his own creation. Convinced of her infidelity, Procci seeks to control "Ofelia" by suggestion. Her co-operation with experiments which she considers diabolical confirms for Procci both her feminine perversity and the nullity of her will. Ultimately, however, he is repelled by the thought of rendering her entirely his creature. With typically decadent equivocation, he permits her to demonstrate her liberty of action. He soon concludes, however, that she will never voluntarily be his and is seeking a new 'padrone'.[86] Procci thus forces her to drown herself by suggestion, to enact, in short, his painting.

Yet as Procci's confession unfolds, his decadent posturing is progressively undermined. The proofs of "Ofelia"'s infidelity become increasingly preposterous. In a lucid interval, Procci wonders why she does not simply break off their engagement His conclusion that she must therefore intend 'qualcosa di orrendo' reveals pathological jealousy.[87] Procci cuts a comical figure in his rune-embroidered bathing-suit, as he accompanies "Ofelia" and her putative lover to the sea. If, and we may doubt it, he sees the couple kiss before deciding to kill "Ofelia", we must conclude that exacerbated jealousy and occult experimentation have driven her from him.

A narrative filtered through Procci offers no objective evidence of "Ofelia"'s spiritual nullity. What initially appears a canonical rehearsal of decadent topoi increasingly resembles the psychopathological case-studies of *Le appassionate*. Indeed, in some respects, it presents fewer decadent traits than Capuana's earlier *novelle*. We recall 'Mostruosità' where Virginia's nymphomania and servility are objectively rendered and where Paolo takes refuge in contemplating her idealized portrait. 'Ofelia' differs radically from *Le appassionate*, however, in the determining role allotted to conscience. As in 'Confessione' and 'Fausto Bragia', remorse drives its protagonist to confess. Capuana equips the decadent hero with the passion and conscience without which, in his view, he remains an arid type. Yet we must not understate the comic aspects of 'Ofelia'. With his deranged

jealousy and preposterous garb, Procci becomes the caricatural mad artist. We may legitimately query his possession of occult powers and role in "Ofelia"'s death. The listening police-chief is clearly unpersuaded of Procci's guilt and calls for a doctor. Ultimately, Capuana appears to hesitate between satirical condemnation of *superomismo* and a naturalistic analysis of psychosis.

In these three *novelle*, the decadent traits of the protagonists -- aestheticism, psychological experimentation, contempt for herd morality -- are undermined from two distinct perspectives. From one, they merely legitimize envy, self-interest, unhealthy curiosity, and an inability to accept one's lot in a providential natural order. From the other, they disguise pathological passions and socio-economic pressure. Ambiguity derives not from a compromise with decadentism but from the unresolved tension between the moralism of Bourget and positivist psychology. In each of its conflicting components, however, Capuana's analysis represents a backward step. We have seen how, in his first two novels, he abandons both determinism and a vestigial Catholicism for a lucid critique of dualistic ideologies. Faced with these *novelle*, one may understand why recent critics argue that decadentism leaves Capuana disorientated and signals the completion of his historical 'function'.

Yet there are two respects in which Capuana's approach evolves significantly over the three tales. Firstly, where 'Confessione' echoes the decadent critique of malign feminine curiosity, 'Fausto Bragia' and, in particular, 'Ofelia' begin to explore how decadent sexual iconography both flatters and blinds the male subject. Secondly, the moralistic zero-focalization of the first two tales gives way, in 'Ofelia', to internal focalization upon an isolated ideologically conditioned psyche. This evolution, we shall see, continues in *La sfinge* and culminates in an altogether more complex analysis of 1890s Italy. We shall find that Capuana develops his critique of decadent sexual stereotypes, portraying the struggle between contending but equally repressive ideologies from within the male consciousness. This is counterbalanced,

however, by a continuing dissection of positivist sexual psychology. As in *Profumo*, idealism and positivism combine to anathematize the feminine and instinctive. This time, however, Capuana's protagonist remains trapped within the divided self.

## 4. *'La sfinge'*

### a) *Part 1: A Decadent Hero?*

*La sfinge* is divided into five parts. The first initially appears to present a stereotypically decadent hero. It consists of a brief scene in which an impresario urges Montani to complete a long-promised play, followed by a series of analeptic passages which evoke the genesis of his relationship with the widow Fulvia. A number of decadent topoi are immediately evoked. Firstly, Montani twirls his faddish Japanese paper-knife in a studio draped with 'tende di seta rosata'.[88] These, like Des Esseintes's pink satin drapery in Huysmans's *À rebours* (1884), mediate the crude light of nature. Designed to capture 'un riflesso del cielo di Benares, intraveduto o sognato dietro la descrizione letta in un bel libro di viaggi' (p. 62), they again recall Des Esseintes's imaginary voyaging.

Secondly, in Montani's failure to follow up two highly applauded plays, he appears afflicted by the premature impotence which, in the decadent analysis, strikes the degenerate Latin artist. He particularly recalls Massival in Maupassant's *Notre coeur* who, after two successes, suffers 'cette espèce d'arrêt qui semble frapper la plupart des artistes contemporains comme une paralyse précoce'.[89]

Thirdly, loss of artistic powers is immediately linked to the influence of woman. As the impresario finally departs, Montani rushes to glimpse Fulvia at the window opposite. Yet he sees only 'il luccichio di un vaso di porcellana e d'una cornice dorata' (p. 62). The empty vessel and pictureless frame imply that he falls for his own creation, committing the decadent sin of Pygmalionism.[90]

A more oblique and ultimately more significant insight into Montani's decadent sensibility is, however, provided by the title of his abandoned play: *Arianna*. It has not been observed that the novel's Sphinx-imagery is counterbalanced by an alternative myth of womanhood. Far from setting riddles, the devoted Ariadne provides her lover with a thread to escape the Labyrinth and a sword to slay the Minotaur. Yet her fate is to be abandoned in the name of a higher destiny. She thus corresponds to the decadent ideal of woman as warrior's rest or launch pad for artistic flight. Montani's inability to complete his *Arianna* is a metaphor for his growing difficulty in moulding Fulvia to the Ariadne-model of womanhood.

He increasingly associates her, conversely, with the sketch of the Sphinx which adorns his studio. The work of a tragically short-lived 'pittore simbolista' (p. 66), it portrays an 'impassibile bellissima figura di donna alata, dagli artigli sanguinolenti, sdraiata indolentemente in cima all'arida montagna, con a piè le sue vittime che imputridivano al sole' (p. 73). In the foreground, waves of 'creature umane' flow towards 'l'enimma da cui erano state sedotte e ammaliate'.

The sketch strongly resembles Moreau's *Le Sphinx vainqueur*, and again we must recall Des Esseintes's passion for Moreau's work. Montani has hitherto paid it scant attention. It has been veiled by the 'creature della sua fantasia' (p. 66) whom the playwright visualizes with hallucinatory clarity. Now, however, he is fascinated by its power and incapable of working. His *Arianna* lies abandoned: 'fatalità del nome' (p. 65).

Fulvia, the deserted widow, who initially appears the embodiment of Ariadne, breaks free of one decadent mythic mould only to be recast as the Sphinx. She is transformed from muse into enemy of art.[91] Yet it is vital to note that both the Sphinx and Ariadne are unfinished sketches. From the outset, they are presented as partial symbols of womanhood.

What, then, has prompted Montani to exchange one decadent myth for the other? As he reviews his relationship with Fulvia, we learn that he has hitherto allotted woman 'una parte secondaria' (p. 63) in his life. He confesses that 's'era sempre lasciato amare più che non avesse amato' (p. 65) and had prided himself on an ability to wriggle free of potentially compromising situations. He evades remorse 'per l'egoistico sentimento della sua completa libertà d'artista'. Woman represents a diversion, a subject of study, an Ariadne sacrificed to a higher ideal.

He refines rather than abandons this model on meeting Fulvia. She offers an opportunity to study in himself emotions that he has hitherto portrayed 'per intuito d'arte'. An affair conceived as 'arte viva, arte vera' will inspire his 'capolavoro'. Montani, then, indulges in decadent commonplaces. He becomes his own guinea-pig and object of study. He views life as a work of art and art as the end of experience.

The most striking aspect of his programme, however, is the conviction that the masterpiece will result from a 'gran dolore' (p. 65). Confidently anticipating betrayal and desertion, Montani reveals an eagerness to view a relationship which faces few practical obstacles as comfortingly finite. In this light, his barely motivated jealousy appears, on one hand, a pretext to explore an extreme and artistically useful emotion and, on the other, a semi-conscious attempt to curtail the relationship.

We should be wary of attributing Montani's suicide to pathological jealousy. On the contrary, jealousy derives at least partly from an over-developed instinct for artistic self-preservation. Montani's grotesquely irrational suspicions do not indicate that psychosis is viewed anti-naturalistically as enigmatic visitation, as Davies suggests,[92] but betray the ideological origin of his jealousy.

Montani, then, seeks to cast Fulvia as Ariadne, disposable means towards art. In order to justify his desertion, however, (and to complete his *Arianna*), he must first recast her as enigmatic

temptress. In other words, in Montani's programme, Ariadne must become the Sphinx in order to fulfill her destiny. The two myths are not antithetical but complimentary images of womanhood.

Yet Montani is not alone in his use of myth. Fulvia's immediate conviction that their affair can last only 'uno, due mesi' (p. 71) is the first hint of her readiness to assume the role of Ariadne. A willing handmaiden to the arts, she is flattered to sacrifice herself to the creative male. Montani may lament her 'scetticismo' but has already betrayed eagerness to circumscribe a useful experience.

It is Fulvia's belief that she is a mere means to an end which leads her to patronize Montani's rival, Butironi. Although Butironi's status as family-friend and doctor to her sickly child, Armando, permit her to refute Montani's suspicions, we perceive that she is keeping a suitor in reserve. If she gladly plays Ariadne to Montani's Theseus, she is sufficiently astute to earmark a Dionysus.

The jealousy that Butironi inspires in Montani is, nonetheless, plainly disproportionate. He will not accept that Armando's delicate health justifies the doctor's visits, and demands that Fulvia abandon the 'tu' form with a childhood friend. The evidence which he cites of Fulvia's infidelity -- 'la più mostruosa doppiezza di cui donna possa esser capace' (p. 75) -- is flimsy. An invitation to a *soirée* prevents Fulvia from spending the evening with Montani. He discovers, however, that Butironi is her chaperon. Given Fulvia's widowhood, Butironi's status as family-friend, and Giorgio's desire to keep their affair private, this cannot be compromising. It is equally unsurprising that Fulvia fails to mention Butironi's presence to her 'jealous' lover. Although Montani brands her 'quella menzogna vivente', Fulvia does not positively deceive him: she would scarcely go out unchaperoned. As he nurtures his jealousy, we note, rather, Montani's reluctance to demand a rational explanation.

Montani thus cuts an absurd figure as he brands Fulvia 'quell'abbiettezza' (p. 75) and laments how she renders him 'l'ombra di sé stesso, una spregevole creatura, uno schiavo'. Hackneyed decadent rhetoric combines with self-aggrandizing Shakespearean imagery as Montani terms Butironi a Cassio-like 'rettile giallo e lentigginoso' who violates his mistress 'con la bava delle sue labbra'. As he intones the verse 'Io son colui | che Otello fu!' (p. 76), we, of course, note that Othello's suspicions are unfounded. The incorrigibly literary-minded Montani constructs a jealous passion from his readings.

Recent critics have failed to perceive that Montani's jealousy is not a spontaneous visitation but evolves over a series of memory-acts. For many commentators, *La sfinge* has an essentially linear narrative. Judith Davies, for example, argues that Capuana pays mere lip-service to internal focalization; events may be related analeptically but the ordered accuracy of Montani's recollections betrays Capuana's controlling presence.[93] Yet the obsessive reliving and structuring of past events provide the novel's fundamental psychological motor.

Montani gradually improvises jealousy from details originally deemed insignificant. Its irrationality signals neither anti-naturalism nor faulty structuring. Innocuous experience becomes retrospectively charged in a narrative formed by a series of internally focalized analepses. The narrator continually highlights how trivial events acquire significance solely with hindsight. Thus Montani recollects Fulvia's 'duplicity' 'quasi ch'egli in quel punto fosse stato proprio spettatore [...] e non un mese addietro' (p. 73). The 'terribile visione' chills him 'assai più che non avesse fatto un mese addietro'.

Montani, then, elaborates a jealous passion both as an artistic experiment and as a means of justifying his planned desertion of Fulvia/Ariadne. His hostility to Butironi is also, however, a revolt against positivism. As Montani attributes his 'invincibile ripugnanza per quella sinistra figura' (p. 71) to Butironi's 'mani sbiancate e magre, quasi da morto... da iettatore, per lo meno!' and

claims that Butironi is killing Armando 'col suo alito, col suo influsso malefico, se non con altro!' (p. 72), he evokes the Charcot-type doctor-hypnotist demonized by the decadents.

Thus far, then, *La sfinge* must appear the satirical portrait of a writer in comic thrall to decadent mythology. Two alternative perspectives, however, show Montani to be a more nuanced figure and the novel a subtler dissection of ideological crisis.

Firstly, there is a tension in Montani between decadent idealism and vestigial positivism. His desire to verify psychological observations experimentally is in evident conflict with his dream of rendering life a work of art. A survey of Montani's previous writings suggests, moreover, a *verista* rather than a decadent.

His creatures are 'agitate dalle loro passioni, sconvolte da crisi di dolore, di gelosia, di rimorsi; ora sorridenti, scettiche, leggere, maliziose e capricciose; ora cattive, perverse e istintivamente malefiche; ora contorte da lieve esagerazione comica che rendeva fin triste i loro riso' (p. 66). If their scepticism, lightness, and perversity recall Capuana's criticism of D'Annunzio, their passion, instinctivity, and capacity for remorse plainly denotes the antithesis of Capuana's vision of decadentism. These characteristics evoke rather the pathological world of *L e appassionate* while the 'lieve esagerazione comica' suggests the pre-Pirandellian *umorismo* of *Le paesane*. Given, moreover, the titles of Montani's plays (*Arianna*, *Cuor triste*, *Ragazze allegre*) and the ideological associations of the adjectives 'leggere', 'capricciose', 'malefiche', we may assume that his subjects are female.[94]

There are, equally, hints that the decadent trappings of Montani's studio are a recent acquisition. Montani's pride in the contrived lighting effects is ironically underlined ('egli si compiaceva di farlo notare' (p. 62)). In furnishing Montani's studio, Capuana has been accused of a desire to appear *à la mode*. This, conversely, is a charge that he lays against his middle-aged protagonist. Montani seems, in fact, a writer in transition, moving from *verismo* to decadentism, from positivism to idealism. We must,

then, reappraise Montani's contempt for Butironi's scientific rationalism. In his hostility to the doctor, there is an element of self-loathing as Montani seeks to transcend his own positivist formation.

Secondly, Montani employs both decadent and positivist literary myths -- art-in-life and experimentalism -- to conceal adolescent vulnerability. Montani's review of his relations with Fulvia is no detached record of refined pleasures. In tranquil middle-age, he is 'colto alla sprovvista' (p. 63) by 'un'insidia della sorte'. Terrified by the newly awakened 'energie del suo essere' (p. 62), he resigns himself 'alla fatalità delle cose, alla misteriosa legge dei fatti' (p. 63). Far from revelling in his finely tuned nerves, Montani fears that 'non avevano bisogno di essere eccitati'. He indulges not in sensuality but in sentimentality, becoming 'un ragazzo a dirittura' (p. 65).

Upon first meeting Fulvia, Montani reveals a fundamental timidity. He confirms that he is indeed the celebrated author of *Cuor triste* 'arrossendo come un fanciullo' (p. 69). Fulvia chides him for his reluctance to appease the curiosity of his female fans by taking a curtain call. Their initial trysts are strikingly innocent. Fulvia 'cortese, buona, lusingata [...] di [*sic*] quella conoscenza' (p. 69) appears no *femme fatale* while Montani with his 'fisionomia seria e indulgente' (p. 70), his 'modi garbati da gentiluomo', his 'qualcosa di attraente e sincero', is equally no Sperelli.

As he childishly banters with Fulvia, the 'piena di affetto' (p. 68) which overcomes him cannot be read as decadent savouring of an exquisite sensibility. Fulvia's use of 'Gogò' (p. 72), the pet-name favoured by Montani's mother, highlights his immaturity. That these two syllables 'avevano la virtù di calmarlo, di sottometterlo subito nei momenti d'impeto' demands a non-heroic reading of his passion. We witness rather a delayed adolescence.

We may be again be reminded of Bourget's Robert Greslou who wonders whether he has constructed the myth of a positivist experiment rather than confess that he has fallen in love. We

might equally recall the positivistic 'uomini forti' of Daudet's *Sapho*, Neera's *Senio*, or Butti's *L'incantesimo* who exclude love from a rational programme only to be snared by their senses. In none of these, however, is the self-image so flimsy a construct and the Achilles' heal so exposed. So thoroughly does timid sentiment undermine experimentation that we cannot read Montani's fate as the come-uppance of an arch-positivist. He appears, rather, to marshal contemporary mythologies in an effort to disguise vulnerability, to master long-repressed energies, and to safeguard his professional tranquillity.[95]

If Part 1 of *La sfinge* implies a critique of decadent sexual mythology, we should be wary, then, of identifying Montani with the stereotypical decadent hero. On closer examination, he reveals a strong affinity with *Profumo*'s Patrizio. In both, positivism and idealism combine to alienate the male subject from the experiential world and to hinder a rapport with the feminine and instinctive. The older Montani differs from his predecessor, however, in semi-consciously exploiting decadent and positivist myth in order to preserve his ascetic solitude.

b) *Part 2: A 'Schopenhauerian' Suicide?*

Part 2 provides further evidence of Montani's stunted emotional growth. It begins with an attack of jealousy which again resembles the self-conscious exploration of an expedient emotion. Montani embraces his suspicions with, as the narrator acidly observes, 'lieta smania di darvisi tutto in preda, quasi in olocausto' (p. 276). Repeatedly crying, 'Perché hai fatto questo. Fulvia? Perché?', he conspicuously fails to address his own question He again marvels that 'soltanto ricordando!' (p. 274), his jealousy should so intensify.

This time, however, we detect more than artistic egoism behind Montani's improvisations. Seeing evidence of Fulvia's duplicity in her habit of blowing kisses in provocative flight, Montani seeks to explain the pleasure that this nonetheless affords him. Although a 'fanciullaggine' (p. 277), it is 'una cosa affatto nuova per lui che

non era mai stato fanciullo, che non era stato mai giovane ed era vissuto fino allora più col cervello che col cuore'. It becomes increasingly evident that he is undergoing a delayed adolescence. His self-protective jealousy may thus safeguard virgin vulnerability as much as artistic liberty.

It is at this point that Montani first espouses the 'Schopenhauerian' apology for suicide.[96] He argues that he has nothing more to learn, having experienced 'tutte le gioie, tutti i dolori dell'amore [...] in pochi mesi, in poche ore, esaurendoli, ed esaurendo nello stesso tempo le sorgenti della vita di lui' (p. 277). He is tempted, then, to end life at an emotional peak before decline sets in.

Yet we can only view Montani's arguments with the utmost scepticism. We must balk as he mourns the death of 'la dolce, la bella favola del suo unico amore'. The relationship has, after all, been presented as literary experiment and brief education in 'authentic' passion. We must likewise query his savouring of 'tutte le gioie, tutti i dolori' in a weeks-old relationship which has not progressed beyond chaste preliminaries. We cannot endorse Montani's celebration of his own sensibility, but perceive rather jealous protection of artistic freedom and a pleasurable immersion in self-pity. At this stage Montani's 'Schopenhauerianism' appears an adolescent literary pose.

The 'senso di pietà e di perdono' (p. 278) which Montani claims to derive from his 'gran dolore' appears equally inspired by his reading. The 'pity and pardon' topos dominates much post-naturalist French and Italian fiction. It derives initially from Schopenhauer and is later bolstered by the discovery of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.[97] Given the flimsy evidence of Fulvia's guilt, Montani again seems in thrall to contemporary literary mythology.

When Montani finally confronts Fulvia, the 'edificio del suo sospetto' (p. 280) predictably crumbles before her 'sicurezza di sé e delle proprie azioni'. He nonetheless resists a reconciliation

which would attest to 'la fiacchezza della volontà' before 'la suggestione dei sensi'. He thus reveals a stereotypically decadent fear of feminine influence.

Fulvia, however, is stung into offering the first detailed insight into her motives. Her *mea culpa* shows her to be a soul-mate of *signora* Martucci, heroine of 'Confessione'. A virtuous bourgeoise 'mezza ignara della vita' (p. 281), she has succumbed to a 'malsana curiosità' (p. 282) to taste 'il famoso pomo proibito' (p. 283). She shares, then, Giorgio's experimental approach to the relationship. She not only mirrors his quest for emotional authenticity but, proudly deeming Montani's jealousy 'un po' cosa sua' (p. 284), similarly aspires to 'l'arte vissuta'. She too, then, is in thrall to both positivist and decadent literary myths.

Fulvia chooses Montani in the conviction that, as an artist, he will be 'scettico per lunga esperienza della vita di amore' (p. 283). Jealous of her bourgeois respectability, she seeks the briefest bite of the forbidden fruit. Believing herself the latest in a succession of conquests, she counts on imminent desertion. She embraces, then, the Ariadne role. Indeed she had been frustrated by the 'sapienti, maliziosi, indugi' (p. 282) with which Montani had thwarted her curiosity. These she now recognizes as marks of timidity. It is the unflattering mirror-image that the equally inexperienced Montani presents as much as his potentially compromising jealousy which now causes Fulvia to propose separation.

If Fulvia assures Montani that curiosity has given way to a 'un sentimento più elevato' (p. 282), Montani's self-lacerating reaction is nonetheless grotesque. 'Cosí nobile, cosí raggiante' does Fulvia appear in 'quel dolore cosí dignitosamente espresso, cosí alteramente sopportato', that he can only beg forgiveness. Where Fulvia glimpses that both are benighted by myths of woman and the artist, Giorgio cannot abjure the Sphinx-Ariadne dichotomy. Where he had hitherto seen an impenetrable temptress, Montani now claims to read Fulvia's angelic mind 'con meravigliosa

lucidità' (p. 284). He fails, then, to perceive his mirror-image in Fulvia's confession.

Seeing that he merely alternates decadent topoi, Fulvia wonders why artists are reputed to read hearts. Montani explains that artistic observation is largely a question of unconscious accumulation. He may, one day, represent their relationship but it will be quite unintentionally. Again revealing her eagerness to be exploited as artistic raw material, Fulvia replies, 'Ah, se un giorno mi rivedessi sul teatro per opra tua!' (p. 284), and urges the reluctant Montani back to his writing-desk. The thought that she may lure him from his vocation fills her with remorse. Montani counters that 'un solo rimorso è giustificato: quello di non aver dato ascolto agli impulsi del cuore' (p. 286). It is not sensual gratification which prevents him from writing but the growing conviction that art is a substitute for 'l'arte vissuta, la passione'. He laments the 'begli istinti depressi o soppressi' (p. 287) which render him a 'mostro'. Artistic seclusion has created 'un tale impasto di miserie intellettuali, che quasi non può dirsi più un uomo'.

Montani thus again appears a descendent of the equally repressed Patrizio. Like *Profumo*, *La sfinge* presents a robust defence of the instinctive sphere rather than an apology for decadentism. Part 2 of the novel suggests that Montani's tragedy lies in his inability to resist myth and to give his awakened instincts full rein. He now questions, like Follini in *Giacinta*, the positivistic detachment and objectivity that alienate the male subject from experiential reality. He no longer sees in his relationship with Fulvia an 'experiment', permitting him to hone his psychological observations. His vision of 'l'arte vissuta', however, will lead him to mould his passions to decadent blueprints.

c) *Part 3: Woman Trapped between Decadentism and Positivism*

Montani's continued thralldom to decadent ideology is ironically underlined when, in Part 3, Fulvia finally visits his studio. In its

'luce rosea' (p. 476), she acquires 'l'apparenza di qualcosa di lieve, di spirituale, d'ideale'. The hint that Montani creates an idealized image of Fulvia is reinforced as she is suddenly framed by a 'larga cornice dorata'.

Further proof of Fulvia's bourgeois circumspection throws his artistic conceit into comic relief. Wary of suspicious neighbours, she is ill at ease throughout a lightning visit. Visibly seeking to memorize every detail of the décor, she reveals that she still considers the affair a brief experiment to be savoured from future respectability. She dismisses her earlier insights into Montani's psyche, casting him once again as the inscrutable and unthreatening artist. Perusing Montani's manuscripts, she deems his illegible scrawl a metaphor for his indecipherable soul.

Crucially, it is precisely as she elaborates an image of male impenetrability that she first glimpses the sketch of the Sphinx. Thus, as Montani repeats his interpretation of the symbol as 'la donna, l'enimma insolubile' (p. 478), his gender-based reading is undermined. We should recall, at this point, that the sex of the painted Sphinx's victims is never specified. They are merely 'creature umane' (p. 66). The enigma of the Sphinx may, then, torment both genders equally.

Yet Capuana does not substitute the decadent myth of enigmatic womanhood with a pessimistic analysis of inevitable mutual incomprehension between the sexes. He exposes, rather, the zeal with which gender cloaks its counterpart in myth.

Thus, as Fulvia derides Montani's gloss ('Misero enimma! Non ci comprende chi proprio non vuole' (p. 478)), her irony might be turned against herself. Having glimpsed his profound immaturity, Fulvia nonetheless nurtures a vision of Montani as disabused rake whose love for her will pass 'come ne sono passati tanti altri nel tuo cuore' (p. 479). She betrays her determination to circumscribe their affair, claiming that 'non durerà molto' (p. 480) and that 'l'incanto è già rotto'. Yet she longs to inspire Montani's masterpiece. It pains her that Montani has abandoned his work,

as, for an artist, woman 'non dev'essere uno scopo, ma un mezzo'. She aspires merely to be 'il tuo svago, il tuo riposo quando sei stanco di lavorare'.

Willingly assuming the Ariadne role, she echoes decadent heroines such as that of Rémy de Gourmont's *Sixtine* (1890) who is frustrated by her lover's inability to mould her to his ends. Yet she fundamentally differs from Sixtine in the insecurity which underpins her words. She does not censure Montani's 'eccitazione' (p. 479) through love of art but through fear for her reputation.

There is more to this fear, however, than a quest for bourgeois respectability. Fulvia's security is now threatened from two angles, as an increasingly suspicious Butironi threatens 'una scena' (p. 482). Judging him both 'innamorato e maligno', Fulvia believes that, with definite proof of her relationship with Montani, he might easily ruin her.

Montani's distrust of Butironi, then, is not altogether unfounded. With his inscrutable, ironic smile and oppressive observation of Fulvia, he is a grotesque caricature of Giacinta's doctor, Follini. Butironi too exposes the vanity of positivist objectivity by falling for his object of study. Yet his Sphinx-like impenetrability implies a significantly harsher critique of positivism than that embodied in Follini. Butironi (whose habitual destructive irony is underlined by his name) is a metaphor for Capuana's diminishing faith in the revelatory power and guiding influence of science and for his fear of the social consequences of its corrosive analysis.

Like Eugenia, Fulvia is caught between two rival but equally repressive myths of womanhood: positivist and idealist. Where in *Profumo*, these are both personified in Patrizio, here they are separately embodied by Fulvia's two suitors. The tussle between Butironi and Montani is one between a concept of woman as neurotic animal and of enigmatic angel/whore. The vestigial positivist elements that we have noted in Montani's thought, however, warn us that both are posited on a dualism with divides mind from body and subject from object. The reputation which

both threaten is not merely that of an insecure bourgeoise but of Fulvia's entire sex.

Fulvia successfully allays Butironi's suspicions and dampens Montani's reawakened jealousy. The reconciled lovers make a trip to the countryside, ominously termed an 'idillio' (p. 482). In Part 3, we increasingly perceive in Montani an authentic quest for renewal hampered by the weight of ideological baggage. As in *Profumo* and *Le appassionate*, an idyll is disturbed by ideological ghosts.

The lovers come upon a staple of Capuana's iconography, a bird's nest. The 'macchiette verdognole' (p. 484) which mark the eggs plainly allude to the danger posed by Montani's 'jealousy', which is to be understood not as psychopathological passion but as the product of a decadent concept of woman set against a rival positivist construct.

Fulvia's participation in the idyll by no means denotes submission to the former. She merely reaches a 'patto' whereby the couple, abjuring 'gelosie', exchange their risky daily trysts for regular meetings in a hired apartment. We again perceive Fulvia's overriding desire to protect her reputation. Her besotted lover, however, regains his faith in the 'bella favola del suo amore'.

Montani now furthers his critique of his artistic asceticism. He perceives that he has devoted himself to 'un ideale assurdo' (p. 485), believing 'il pensiero' paramount and repressing 'il naturale svolgimento delle sue facoltà'. His organism has rebelled 'tanto più violentamente quanto più tardi'.

This conclusion, heavily endorsed by an intrusive narrator, is, of course, that reached by Patrizio in *Profumo*. The sentiment and imagination which Montani has scorned in favour of 'reflection' have assaulted him 'a tradimento' in the form of his characters. These are mere 'riflessi, echi di sè stesso, falsità'. They see the world through his eyes,

scettici per ignoranza, pessimisti per difetto di comprensione, egoisti per via dell'egoismo di lui, avidi di novità, di rarità, come lui che finora non aveva capito quanto la vita sia più ricca di rarità e di novità che non tutte le sciocche combinazioni della pretesa riflessione. (p. 486)

The charges of subjectivity and sophistry are those which Capuana levels against the decadents. Again, however, Montani's characters must unequivocally be read as feminine. He reserves particular opprobrium for Matilde, the neurotic protagonist of *Cuor triste*. Glossed as women, Montani's earlier characters resemble the repressed heroine of the *scapigliato*/naturalist tradition. They imply a positivist approach to feminine psychology which Montani has now largely abandoned but which is represented in *La sfinge* by Butironi.

Montani does not, however, merely dismiss his earlier production but deems his *Arianna* a 'falsità peggio di tutte' (p. 485). He now finds it false in both theory and execution. His projected experimental exploration of passion has led to the rebellion of his organism against 'riflessione'. His protagonist, meanwhile, the disposable Ariadne, increasingly strikes him as a fallacious myth.

Montani nonetheless retains the ideal of 'l'arte vissuta'. Where, originally, however, the living work of art was to inspire his literary masterpiece, it now becomes an end in itself. In this, Montani remains vulnerable to idealist sexual myths. He makes the mistake of equating 'riflessione' with the positivist elements of his thought. An idealism which similarly divorces spirit and flesh will prove an equally dangerous manifestation of 'riflessione'.

If, however, Montani already acknowledges the inanity of his experiment and the falseness of his literary production, we must query Pagliaro's thesis that Montani is driven to suicide by the sudden revelation of artistic bankruptcy at the novel's conclusion. It becomes clear, towards the conclusion of Part 3, that Montani is already seriously considering suicide. His participation in the search for a suitable love-nest is a 'pietoso artificio' (p. 488) to

allay Fulvia's fears. Does, then, a long-premeditated suicide arise from a realization of literary failure which occurs somewhat earlier than Pagliaro suggests? Two alternative motives are, in fact, floated.

Firstly, Montani espouses the 'Schopenhauerian' apology for suicide more convincingly than in Part 2. Persuaded that he has solved the Sphinx's riddle -- 'Amare ed essere amato!' (p. 486)' -- he wishes to die before the inevitable waning of his present 'beatitudine' (p. 487). His conviction that the idyll cannot last is now, however, grounded in the perception that both lovers are hampered by ideological baggage. He finally grasps that Fulvia is 'attinta dallo stesso male di lui' (p. 488). She has acted 'per curiosità', 'per riflessione'. The 'triste veleno' of reflection must inevitably contaminate their relationship.[98] Yet we must note that Montani stresses her positivist ideological baggage, experimentalism, and curiosity, rather than her equally dangerous susceptibility to decadent myths of woman and the artist.

Secondly, a rather more naturalistic factor is suggested. Both Marchese and Davies discount the possibility that the suicide of Montani's brother Ernesto implies a hereditary nervous condition.[99] For Davies, Ernesto serves merely to introduce the 'Schopenhauerian' apology for suicide. Yet Ernesto takes his life not in a moment of plenitude but because 'la vita gli era diventata insopportabile' (p. 673). Hereditary and ideological factors need not, moreover, be mutually exclusive. In *Il trionfo della morte*, the suicide of Aurispa's uncle Demetrio constitutes both a moral example and a genetic precedent.

There are hints too of an environmental influence. We might detect the seeds of Montani's suicide in the enigmatic death through 'miseria' (p. 66) of his friend Rocchi, painter of the Sphinx. We might equally consider the recent death of Montani's beloved mother (for whom he plainly seeks a substitute in Fulvia). Whichever factor predominates, Montani is seriously studying 'tutti i particolari del suo suicidio' (p. 488) at the close of

Part 3. Does the remainder of the novel, then, relate the execution of a preordained design?

d) *Part 4: Myth and Mystification*

Part 4 suggests otherwise. Butironi is recalled to tend Fulvia's child, Montani's jealousy rekindled, and the idyll destroyed. The presence of his positivist rival exacerbates Montani's idealism, causing him once again to cast Fuliva as the enigmatic and destructive Sphinx. He dismisses his fantasizing 'intorno al miglior modo di arrestare l'ora felice' (p. 661), judging his beatitude that of a gulled lover. Having glimpsed the threat posed by Fulvia's thralldom to positivist literary myths, he is powerless to resist the hold of decadent myth upon himself.

In lucid moments, however, Montani perceives that Fulvia is ruled primarily by her 'paura di compromettersi' (p. 662). Yet he fails to locate the source of Fulvia's fear. He neither perceives her struggle between conflicting ideological images of womanhood nor lends weight to the socio-economical factors which dictate caution. It becomes increasingly evident that, Fulvia, placed under financial strain by her son's illness and her bankrupt husband's creditors, reluctantly contemplates marriage with Butironi. Having earlier discussed her economic situation with Montani, she clearly expects him to understand her calculations and to seize her delicate allusions to 'certi affari' (p. 664).

Montani, however, confronts her with accusations of evasiveness and 'inesplicabile crudeltà' (p. 662). In response, Fulvia eloquently laments her entrapment between the rival jealousies of artist and doctor and the conflicting myths which they represent. If she were to give herself fully to Montani and thus espouse the decadent model of womanhood, she would be 'condannata e disprezzata da quella stessa società che ti stimerebbe seduttore degno d'ammirazione e d'invidia' (p. 668).

Her appeal to Montani's grasp of institutional reality is in vain. He sees in her analysis merely the 'malefica influenza' (p. 669) of

the 'reflective' Butironi. He again, then, erroneously equates 'riflessione' with Butironi's disabused positivism, failing to see that idealism too divorces subject from object and man from woman. Scorning socio-economic arguments, he challenges Fulvia with definitive proof of her betrayal: he has seen Butironi surreptitiously kiss Fulvia's hand. She concedes that this is possible but rightly observes that it is uncompromising on the part of a tolerated suitor. Exasperated by her lover's jealousy, Fulvia again proposes separation and swiftly brings Montani to heel.

Fulvia, then, lucidly exposes the practical dangers of decadent ideology. Yet she cannot escape its pull. This confrontation leads her to conclude that 'sono fatale perché noccio alle persone che amo e che mi amano' (pp. 669-70). She too, then, alternately casts herself as handmaiden and *femme fatale.*

Amidst the fug of myth, however, both lovers remained convinced that their psyches are transparent. Just as Fulvia expects Montani to grasp oblique references to her financial difficulties, Montani insists: 'Dovresti capirmi senza che io parlassi, dovresti leggermi nel cuore' (p. 667). *La sfinge* is essentially a tragedy of incomprehension where each protagonist unwittingly dons the Sphinx's mask. Unlike Maupassant or De Roberto, Capuana does not question the possibility of transcending subjective consciousness but exposes the mystificatory power of myth.

As Butironi again withdraws, and the lovers are reconciled, Montani confesses to himself that he may not have witnessed the treacherous kiss. Regretting his stubborn jealousy, he identifies with hurrying figures in Piazza del Popolo 'spinte da passioni, come era spinto -- pensava -- e incalzato anche e lui' (p. 672). The inserted 'pensava' warns us against viewing Montani as a victim of passion rather than ideology. Amidst the internal focalization of *La sfinge*, we encounter many such indicators of authorial distance-taking. Thus, when a cancelled date rekindles Montani's jealousy, and he identifies with an elderly victim in the sketch of

the Sphinx, indirect free speech is rudely interrupted by the phrase: 'Giorgio credette di riconoscere in esso il proprio simbolo' (p. 673). Montani's interpretation of the symbol is once more undermined.

Tormented again by jealousy, Montani regrets his cowardice in not killing himself at the height of happiness. An unequivocally 'Schopenhauerian' suicide is thus excluded. Montani envies Ernesto's courage solely because he too finds life intolerable. Suicide would, however, be pointless if Butironi, whom Montani considers the personification of 'riflessione', were to survive. Appalled by the murderous implications of his logic, Montani suppresses his jealousy. He accepts Fulvia's explanation that a dinner invitation has forced her to cancel their rendezvous.

This is the briefest interlude of lucidity. At the end of Part 4, he spies on Fulvia as she returns from dinner and finds her accompanied by Butironi. Given the presence of her son, we might consider Butironi a necessary and uncompromising chaperon whose attendance Fulvia might reasonably have concealed from her jealous lover. If, however, this is a genuine assignation, Montani is already appraised of the economic factors which might favour Butironi's suit. Montani, however, believes that he has uncovered proof of Fulvia's intrinsic duplicity. Where at the conclusion of Part 3 he lucidly perceives that ideological baggage threatens his idyll, he now appears crushed by the weight of myth.

e) *Part 5: 'Reflection' and Art-in-Life*

In the concluding fifth part, Montani confronts Fulva with his 'proof'. She at first offers no defence, protesting that Montani would only find a 'pretesto a sospettare di più' (p. 678) in anything that she might say. Her arguments would inevitably be turned against her. Capuana's heroines of the 1890s increasingly retreat into self-protective silence lest their words be distorted by positivist and decadent alike.

Finally, however, Fulvia laments that Montani is led astray by his 'immaginazione di artista'. The habit of scrutinizing 'l'anima troppo complicata' of his characters leaves him incapable of grasping 'le cose semplici'. He thus cannot see that she is 'la meno complicata di tutte le creature del mio sesso'. She concedes however that she is partly to blame. Ashamed to show herself 'una donna alla buona', 'una borghesuccia amante del cheto vivere', she has savoured 'il malsano piacere di mostrarmi a te l'opposto di quella che sono' and spoken 'un linguaggio imparaticcio'.

It is this passage which leads Pirandello to speak of a 'commedia prestabilita' where Fulvia self-consciously conforms to Montani's taste for psychological complexity. We should nonetheless recall that Montani glimpses, in Part 3, Fulvia's unhealthy 'smania del nuovo, del raro' (p. 488) and propensity for psychological experiments. Her words cannot, then, be an authentic revelation. We might also feel that Fulvia's self-judgment is somewhat harsh. She has barely concealed her bourgeois caution. Indeed this *mea culpa* is perhaps her most self-dramatizing gesture.

Montani's response is a desperate effort to evade the implications of Fulvia's analysis. Her candour elicits the absurd cry of 'Sfinge! Terribile Sfinge!' (p. 678). For Pagliaro, this wild accusation is an attempt to flee the revelation of artistic bankruptcy.[100] Yet we have already seen Montani judge his literary production psychologically false in Part 3. Fulvia's charge is one which he levels against himself.

Perhaps, then, he strives to salvage not so much his artistic production as the ideal of 'l'arte vissuta', for which literature is a *pis aller*. He seeks to deny the experimentalism and abuse of analysis which, as he feared in Part 3, threatens his relationship, and thus clings to the decadent/idealist concept of womanhood.

Likewise, he refuses to understand why Fulvia, seeking a synthesis between positivist and idealist sexual ideologies, cannot renounce her connections with Butironi. Lamenting the

'infrangibile catena' (p. 679) which links Fulvia to Butironi, he again attributes hypnotic powers to the positivist doctor. Anathematizing positivist 'riflessione', then, he embraces equally dangerous idealist 'riflessione'.

Faced with Montani's retreat into idealism, Fulvia too cannot retain her lucidity. As the anguished Montani painfully seizes her, we recall the 'artigli sanguinolenti' (p. 73) of the painted Sphinx. It is Fulvia's vestigial image of Montani as womanizer and poseur which blinds her to hints that he intends to take his own life.

The much-criticized finale is a further signal that *La sfinge* represents a tragedy of ideologically conditioned incomprehension. At the precise moment that he commits suicide, Fulvia receives a telepathic image of Montani waving farewell. For Croce, Capuana merely indulges a taste for scientific curiosities. Caccia regrets a decadent nod to the occult. Madrignani and Storti Abate perceive the ill-digested influence of the fantastic writings of Verne, Wells, and Maupassant. For Davies, Capuana seeks merely to highlight his protagonist's spiritual refinement.[101] Yet the device is more functional and appropriate than has been allowed. Telepathic communication cuts through the ideological mist which has prevented mutual understanding.

What, ultimately, though, triggers Montani's suicide? His final words suggest that he is desperately evading the realization that his 'arte vissuta' is illusory. Fulvia's confession causes Montani to recall his own fears that positivist 'riflessione' has contaminated his relationship and to recognize that these were well-founded. The impossibility of genuine renewal drives him to take his life.

Yet the suicide effectively completes Montani's work of living art as originally conceived. He abandons Fulvia/Ariadne and leaves the path clear for Butironi/Dionysus. His *Arianna*, the 'falsità peggio di tutte', is transferred from the page to reality. If the suicide is a protest against unconquerable 'riflessione', it merely highlights Montani's mistake in equating 'riflessione' with positivist analysis and his continued thralldom to idealist images

of woman and the artist. His death merely substitutes one dualistic ideology for another and holds out no possibility of synthesis between mind and body, subject and object.[102]

* * * *

*La sfinge* may certainly be read as a continuation of the critique of decadentism developed in Capuana's essays and shorter fiction of the early 1890s. An experimenter *in anima vili* is defeated by the revolt of long-suppressed faculties. Indulgence in psychological complexity masks subjectivism and inexperience. Irrepressible 'riflessione' and an idealist sexual iconography prevent redemptive spontaneity.

Yet, as we have seen, Montani is, in many respects, no typical decadent. He appears to embrace decadentism in middle-age. His previous literary production suggests a psychological naturalist. The decadent trappings of his studio are naive and self-conscious. His horrified conclusion that he cannot escape artifice is the *starting-point* for the authentic decadent.

Montani resembles, rather, an older Patrizio. As in *Profumo*, a desired reconciliation with nature is threatened by an ascetic ideology which posits a dualistic concept of woman. The Ariadne/Sphinx dichotomy matches Patrizio's alternating perception of Eugenia as angel and temptress. It is significant that Montani particularly admires a portrait of Fulvia dressed as a 'contadina di Betlemme' (p. 663). There is the suggestion that decadent ideology merely reinforces, in Montani, Patrizio's biblical image of womanhood.

*La sfinge*, however, implies that Capuana now questions the possibility of overcoming ideological conditioning. There is none of *Profumo*'s optimistic endorsement of will and faith. Both Montani and Fulvia apprehend but fail to escape their subjection to institutionalized myths. If Montani's self-knowledge is partial, Fulvia lucidly sees herself as a battle-ground for rival iconographies. Yet, caught between positivist and decadent

concepts of woman, she cannot perceive a third path. She can only choose between Butironi and Montani.

It is Fulvia and child who reveal that *La sfinge* is not merely an extension of Capuana's literary criticism but, like *Profumo*, the analysis of a post-*Risorgimento* ideological crisis. Fulvia is widowed by a bankrupt speculator. In her husband's unprincipled profiteering, we may see a cipher for the discredited secular state. Progressive liberalism splinters into the rival ideologies personified by Butironi and Montani. Science as guarantor of progress evolves into a dangerously amoral positivism. Romantic nationalism mutates into Montani's exacerbated idealism. The contest for Fulvia's hand is an allegorical struggle for the nation's soul. If Montani's suicide leaves Butironi master of the field, the doctor embodies a dualism as dangerous as Montani's own. *La sfinge* offers, then, a profoundly pessimistic analysis of 1890s Italy.

Montani and Butironi compete not only for the role of husband but for that of surrogate father. Fulvia's son Armando, the novel's most critically neglected character, is the sickly child of ideological crisis. The ministrations of Butironi are powerless to repair his health. His one substantial scene suggests that his preference is for Montani.

Fulvia, judging him too naive, has sought to disabuse him of his belief in the *Beffana*. Armando begs and obtains from Montani assurance of the contrary. Rebuked by Fulvia, Montani appoints himself the protector of the child's illusions. Rejecting both his father's capitalism and Butironi's positivism, Armando displays a potentially healthy capacity for faith and idealism. In Montani, however, he chooses a dangerous spiritual guide. It is to Armando's generation and its mentors that Capuana will return in his final novel *Rassegnazione*.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1] Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 108-09. Fulvia 'receives' a telepathic image of Montani as he commits suicide.

[2] Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 12.

[3] Luigi Pirandello, '*La sfinge*', in Sipala, pp. 85-88 (p. 87) (first publ. under the pseudonym 'Giulian Dorpelli' in *Rassegna settimanale universale*, 14 February 1897).

[4] Gian Pietro Lucini, '*La sfinge*', in Gian Pietro Lucini, *Scritti critici*, ed. by Luciana Martinelli (Bari: De Donato, 1971), pp. 15-17 (p. 15) (first publ. in *La domenica letteraria*, no. 58 (1897)).

[5] Ibid., p. 17.

[6] Madrignani, p. 249. *La sfinge* attracts little comment between the first decade of this century and the 1970s. It is, for example, entirely overlooked by monographers such as Pellizzari, Traversa, and Vetro. As most subsequent critics have subscribed to Madrignani's thesis that Capuana exhausts his historical function by 1890, there is scarcely more discussion of *La sfinge* in the wealth of Capuana criticism published in the last twenty-five years.

[7] Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 43.

[8] Davies, pp. 99-106.

[9] Marchese, p. 105.

[10] Henry B. Fuller's review is published in *The Critic*, May 29 1897, pp. 365-66, and partially reprinted in Scalia, p. 220.

[11] Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 2907-08.

[12] Annamaria Pagliaro, 'Aspetti tecnici e continuità tematica ne *La Sfinge* di Luigi Capuana', *Spunti e ricerche*, 4 (1988-89), 63-82 (p. 64).

[13] Ibid., p. 66.

[14] Ibid., p. 69. This, of course, is largely Pirandello's thesis. Pirandello, however, detects no element of self-consciousness in Giorgio's delirium.

[15] Ibid., p. 68.

[16] Ibid., p. 71

[17] Ibid., p. 78.

[18] Ibid., p. 67.

[19] See, in particular, Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 102-05, Pellizzari, pp. 9-20, and Tonelli, *La critica letteraria italiana negli ultimi cinquant'anni*, pp. 448-53. It is conspicuous that, in order to maintain such a static view of Capuana's critical 'personality', Croceians predominately cite the later writings, especially *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei* (1898), and skim over the period of engagement with naturalism.

[20] Russo's judgment of Capuana is most succinctly expressed in *I narratori*, pp. 67-68.

[21] See, for example, Vallone, pp. 88-89.

[22] The Croceian perspective is adopted by Marchese, pp. 15-27, Pinagli, 'La critica di Luigi Capuana', cit., passim, Navarria, 'Le "formole metafisiche" di Luigi Capuana', cit., passim, and Scuderi, 'Capuana critico', cit., passim. Vallone's view is echoed in Raya, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana*, p. 246.

[23] See Gaetano Trombatore, 'La critica di Luigi Capuana e la poetica del verismo', cit., passim.

[24] Bigazzi, *I colori del vero*, pp. 357-60.

[25] Madrignani, p. 248.

[26] Enrico Ghidetti, Introduction to Capuana, *Semiritmi*, pp. 5-40 (pp. 34-35) (repr. as '"A semiuomini, semiritmi!"', in Ghidetti, *L'ipotesi del realismo*, pp. 125-53). See also Ghidetti, 'Il demonio della novella', cit., pp. XLVI-XLIX.

[27] Storti Abate, pp. 126-30.

[28] Davies, pp. 84-86. See also Gaetano Ragonese, 'Capuana tra positivismo e naturalismo: *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*', in *Letteratura e critica: studi in onore di Natalino Sapegno*, 5 vols (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974-79), II (1975), 703-20 (pp. 718-20).

[29] The space devoted to theatre is the most surprising aspect of *Libri e teatro. Il teatro italiano contemporaneo* had, after all, sounded the death-knell of a genre which reaches its apogee in the bourgeois drama of Augier and Dumas *fils* and is to make way for the quintessentially contemporary form of the novel. Accordingly, it is almost entirely absent from Capuana's critical volumes of the 1880s. Now, however, faced with the emergence of a European naturalist theatre in Becque, Ibsen, and Strindberg, and with a vogue for *verista* theatre (Giacosa, Praga, Rovetta, Antona Traversi) which outlives that for *verista* prose, and perhaps too -- given Capuana's increasingly parlous economic conditions -- intrigued by the financial possibilities of stage success, he is prepared to grant it a temporary reprieve. The late 1880s and early 1890s see Capuana engaged in a number of theatrical projects: the plays *Il piccolo archivio* (1886), *La fine di un idillio* (1887), and *Malìa* (1891), the stage version of *Giacinta* (1888), and translations of Ibsen's *Doll's House* and Becque's *La Parisienne* (1889-90).

[30] Luigi Capuana, 'Intuitivismo', in Capuana, *Libri e teatro*, pp. 119-27 (p. 120) (first publ. in *Lettere e arti*, 15 February 1890).

[31] Ibid., p. 119.

[32] Luigi Capuana, 'Teatro libero', in *Libri e teatro*, pp. 71-90 (p. 72) (first publ. in *La tavola ronda*, 29 November 1891). This article purports to be an overview of the recent productions of André Antoine's Théâtre libre and Paul Fort's Théâtre d'art. In reality, all the pieces considered were staged by the latter.

[33] Ibid., p. 71.

[34] Ibid., p. 72.

[35] Ibid., p. 76.

[36] Ibid., p. 90.

[37] Luigi Capuana, 'Gabriele D'Annunzio', in Capuana, *Scritti critici*, pp. 65-72 (p. 68) (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Per l'arte* (Catania:

Giannotta, 1885)). As, with the exception of his piece on *Il fuoco*, all of Capuana's articles on D'Annunzio are printed together in *Scritti critici*, I shall, for the sake of convenience, always cite this volume when discussing Capuana's critical reception of D'Annunzio.

[38] Ibid., p. 66.

[39] Ibid., p. 72.

[40] Luigi Capuana, 'Gabriele d'Annunzio [*sic*]', in *Scritti critici*, pp. 73-94 (p. 73) (first publ. in Capuana, *Libri e teatro*, pp. 3-48).

[41] Ibid., p. 74.

[42] Ibid., p. 92.

[43] Ibid., p. 74.

[44] Ibid., p. 73.

[45] Ibid., p. 77.

[46] Ibid., p. 82.

[47] At times, the failure to link method and ideology appears disingenuous. In a review of De Roberto's *La sorte* (1887), Capuana notes that the title resumes the volume's 'philosophy'. Yet De Roberto never distorts 'la realtà dei fatti'. With his mastery of impersonality, he never permits concept to outweigh form. Does Capuana really not glimpse the compatibility of the impersonal method with a fatalistic world-view which, he observes, 'indica un ingegno ben dotato per l'osservazione'? (Luigi Capuana, 'Novelle', in *Libri e teatro*, pp. 143-54 (p. 144) (first publ. in *Fanfulla della domenica*, 1 May 1887)).

[48] Those few works which gain Capuana's approval tautologically echo the reviews of *La vita dei campi* and *I Malavoglia*. Thus the protagonists of Zena and De Roberto are regionally characteristic and act autonomously 'senza lasciar punto scorgere dietro di essi un autore' ('Novelle', cit., p. 152). Capuana conspicuously endorses only the *verista* strand of De Roberto's fiction, passing over his parallel Bourget-inspired production. One notes, in particular, his failure to discuss *Documenti umani* (1888), the preface to which strikingly pre-empts Rod's *intuitiviste* manifesto.

[49] Luigi Capuana, 'G. D'Annunzio: *Giovanni Episcopo* e *L'innocente*', in *Scritti critici*, pp. 95-113 (first publ. in *La tavola rotonda*, 24 April 1892).

[50] Ibid., p. 103 and p. 102.

[51] Ibid., p. 99.

[52] Ibid., p. 108.

[53] Ibid., p. 95.

[54] Ugo Ojetti, 'Luigi Capuana', in Ugo Ojetti, *Alla scoperta dei letterati* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1946), pp. 228-38 (p. 233). The other two novels are *I viceré* and, more surprisingly, Butti's *L'anima*.

[55] Ibid., p. 230.

[56] Luigi Capuana, 'Romanzi e novelle: E. A. Butti, Neera, L. Gualdo', in Capuana, *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, pp. 72-82 (p. 72) (first publ. as 'Tre romanzi', *La tavola rotonda*, 7 August 1892).

[57] Ibid., p. 79.

[58] Davies, pp. 102-03.

[59] Luigi Capuana, 'L'odissea della donna', in *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, pp. 124-32 (p. 127) (first publ. in *Tribuna illustrata*, July 1893).

[60] Little critical attention has been devoted to the tales collected in *Fausto Bragia e altre novelle* (1897), *Il braccialetto* (1898), *Nuove paesane* (1898), and *Anime a nudo* (1900). Croceian critics juxtapose *novelle* from different stages in Capuana career in an effort to construct a fixed 'personality', but conspicuously neglect the 1890s production. They appear reluctant to face the challenge of reconciling these pieces with Capuana's indefatigable opposition to decadentism. Most subsequent critics subscribe to pre-1890 Madrignani's 'naturalist' canon beyond which Capuana exhausts his historical function. Even those who have sought to extend the limits of the *oeuvre* have passed over the fiction of the 1890s. Enrico Ghidetti, for example, attempts to rehabilitate Capuana's post-1900 shorter fiction. He perceives that their protagonists

may be read as a wry comment on D'Annunzio's superman or Fogazzaro's saint and detects a 'borghesemente solida eredità da lasciare al nuovo secolo' in the implication that

> della realtà si sarebbero dovute e potute raccogliere solo schegge e frammenti, relitti di antiche tradizioni popolari e presagi fantastici di un avvenire prossimo, nei quali tutti, in qualche modo, si riverberasse l'inquieta coscienza individuale. (Ghidetti, 'Il demonio della novella', cit., p. 123)

Accordingly, in Capuana, *Racconti*, his anthology of Capuana's shorter fiction, Ghidetti includes the entire contents of *Il decameroncino* (1901), *Delitto ideale* (1902), *Coscienze* (1905), *Un vampiro* (1907), and *Voluttà di creare* (1911). Yet the four 1890s collections cited above -- which could only have bolstered his claims -- remain unrepresented. This is an omission that Ghidetti neither acknowledges nor explains. An otherwise comprehensive anthology contains only one piece ('Il medico dei poveri') composed in the 1890s.

The recent study *Novelliere impenitente* follows Ghidetti in highlighting the formal innovations of the post-1900 production. It moves directly, however, from the retrospective compilation *Le appassionate* (published in 1893 but containing nothing written after 1890) to *Delitto ideale* and makes no attempt to examine how Capuana's craft may have evolved in-between. Indeed, nowhere is it hinted that he published any tales in the intervening years.

Other critics, such as Bigazzi, imply that the bulk of Capuana's 1890s fiction is in the manner of his *paesane* (Roberto Bigazzi, 'La carriera di un novelliere', in*L'illusione della realtà*, pp. 92-112 (p. 110)). This is quite untenable -- barely a third fits the regionalist mould -- but facilitates a reading of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* as an unequivocal manifestation of *verismo*.

The sole critic to engage with Capuana's shorter fiction of the 1890s is Edoardo Villa. He highlights a growing anti-naturalist stress on conscience and a regrettable tendency to moralize. Capuana displays 'una peculiare disponibilità' towards neo-idealism, grafting onto an essentially *verista* form '"inesplicabili" vibrazioni psicologiche, fantasticherie pseudoscientifiche e viaggi nell'ignoto a limite tra l'allucinazione, il sogno e il dato spiritico' (Villa, Introducton to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 49). The subconscious emerges as a persistent narrative theme but never with 'la lacerante validità (quasi metafisica) dei decadenti'. The

paranormal is viewed in a dilettantish fashion as a mere object of scientific curiosity. For Villa, these tales veer towards the anecdotal, betraying slipshod composition and a lack of psychological penetration. The generically bourgeois setting and a style floundering between *verismo* and decadentism contribute to an impression of flaccidity.

[61] He edits the magazine *Cenerentola* and publishes *Il pecoro nero*, *Il raccontafiabe*, *Fanciulli allegri* (all 1894), *Il drago*, and *Una bomba* (both 1895), and, for much the same public, his *Ricordi d'infanzia e di giovinezza* (1893).

[62] Luigi Pirandello, 'Conversazione letteraria', in *La critica*, 5 January 1896, and Diego De Roberto, '*La sfinge* di Luigi Capuana', *Le grazie*, 16 January 1897 (both partly repr. in Sipala, p. 32).

[63] Scalia, p. 200.

[64] One might also detect disillusionment following the collapse of his theatrical ambitions. *Malìa* and the adaptation of *Giacinta* are both commercial failures. It should also be noted that the years 1889-92 are amongst the most traumatic of the writer's life. So deeply was Capuana in debt in 1890 that, according to Scalia, he contemplated suicide (Scalia, p. 197). His obsessive relationship with Beppa Sansoni came to a formal close in 1892 when she was 'married off' to Mario Speranza.

[65] Of the other five, four are *paesane*: 'Il medico dei poveri' (first publ. in*Il folchetto*, 10 January 1892, and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, II, 196-203), 'Donna Stràula' (first publ. in *La riforma*, 7 February1895, and repr. in Luigi Capuana, *Nuove paesane* (Turin: Roux Frassati, 1898), pp. 139-55), 'Le verginelle', and 'Zi' Gamella' (which will both be discussed in chapter 4). The remaining piece, 'Il primo maggio del dottor Piccottini' (first publ. in *Il folchetto*, 1 May 1892, and repr. in Luigi Capuana, *Fausta Bragia e altre novelle* (Catania: Giannotta, 1897), pp. 135-43) is a satire attesting to Capuana's growing disenchantment with positivist science and opposition to positivistic Socialism. In its scientist-hero, Capuana ridicules the eugenist proposals of sections of the European Left.

[66] The rape-victim Teresa in 'Tortura' (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Fumando* (Catania: Giannotta, 1889) and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, I, 255-78) is, in lucid moments, aware of her objective innocence. Wrongly accused of adultery, Giustina in 'Ribrezzo' (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Ribrezzo* (Catania:

Giannotta, 1884) and repr. in *Racconti*, I, 427-74) rebels against the guilt which her peers force upon and sets up with her putative lover. Unconquerable sexual aversion, however, provokes further guilt. This stems not from the contravention of a moral code but from an inability to enact either of the societally sanctioned roles of spouse or sinner.

[67] Luigi Capuana, 'Confessione: novella', *Nuova antologia*, 34 (1891), 459-73 (p. 461).

[68] Ibid., p. 462.

[69] Ibid., p. 467.

[70] Ibid., p. 466 and p. 460.

[71] Ibid., p. 468.

[72] Paul Bourget, *Le Disciple* (Paris: Nelson, 1937), p. 244.

[73] Capuana, 'Confessione', cit., p. 468.

[74] Ibid., p. 462 and p. 461.

[75] Ibid., p. 473.

[76] Ibid., p. 460.

[77] Paul Bourget, *Cruelle énigme*, 24th edn (Paris: Lemerre, 1893), p. 176. One might detect, in 'Confessione', a tension between the Bourget of the 1880s with his Schopenhauerian religion of compassion and the Catholic moralist of the 1880s.

[78] Bourget, *Le Disciple*, p. 175.

[79] In the revised version of 'Confessione' in *Fausto Bragia e altre novelle* the tension is resolved in favour of a naturalist interpretation. In a dream sequence just after *signora* Martucci's decision to conduct her 'experiment', a long-time admirer makes a violent declaration of love. Amazed to find that she longs to recapture the intensity of the dream, the heroine realizes that 'aveva troppo presunto di sé' (Luigi Capuana, 'Confessione', in Capuana, *Fausto Bragia e altre novelle*, pp. 63-88 (p. 80)). The effect is to undermine her confession and to make explicit what is only adumbrated in the first version. The heroine simply

rationalizes a passionate impulse. Similarly, the 'aveva agito pensatamente' of the first version (*Nuova antologia*, p. 409) becomes 'le pareva di aver agito pensatamente' (*Fausta Bragia e altre novelle*, p. 81). The conclusion too is less moralistic. The husband's initial reaction is identical but his 'sconcia parola' soon gives way to 'una parola più degna e più giusta' (ibid., p. 88).

[80] Luigi Capuana, 'Fausto Bragia', in *Fausto Bragia e altre novelle*, pp. 1-50 (p. 5) (first publ. in *Tribuna illustrata*, January 1893).

[81] Ibid., p. 47.

[82] Ibid., p. 50.

[83] Unless he means to suggest that decadentism merely rehashes *scapigliato* themes.

[84] One detects the influence of Maupassant's 'Un fou?' (1884) and 'Le Horla' (1887) and of such Dostoevsky novellas as *The Meek Girl* (1876) and *Notes from Underground* (1864).

[85] Luigi Capuana, 'Ofelia', in *Fausto Bragia e altre novelle*, pp. 89-108 (p. 94) (first publ. in *Tribuna illustrata*, May 1893).

[86] Ibid., p. 105.

[87] Ibid., p. 102.

[88] Luigi Capuana, *La sfinge: racconto*, *Nuova antologia*, 59 (1895), 60-76 (p. 62), 274-88, 475-89, 661-82. Further references are given after quotations in the text. *La sfinge* is republished in volume-form in Milan by Brigola in 1897.

[89] Guy de Maupassant, *Notre coeur*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p. 80.

[90] We note Capuana's re-use of the image of adjacent windows overlooking a void, familiar from *Profumo*, as a cipher for non-communication between the sexes.

[91] Which now itself becomes the abandoned Ariadne.

[92] Davies, p. 101. Nor, as Marchese asserts, do they simply imply poor psychological preparation on Capuana's part (Marchese, p. 105).

[93] Davies, p. 103.

[94] The sentimental titles of Montani's plays (*Cuor triste*, *Ragazze allegre*) scarcely suggest the D'Annunzian figure posited by recent critics. Indeed, they appear somewhat out of place in a *fin de siècle* context. They possibly evoke Bourget at his most *rose* (*Un coeur de femme*, *Pastels*) or Maupassant at his most Bourgettian (*Notre coeur*, *Fort comme la mort*).

[95] Ultimately, this middle-aged 'buddista' (Capuana, *La sfinge*, cit., p. 65) who beneath a 'serenità molto ostentata' conceals 'un pessimismo rassegnato' and a fear of exposing 'alla gente, curiosa, o maligna, o indifferente, i più intimi sentimenti e le miserie e le contraddizioni del cuore' may recall contemporary portrayals of Capuana himself. One recalls Ojetti's depiction of a placid, industrious hermit in 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 228-29, and, in particular, De Roberto's portrait of Capuana as the Buddhist sage Ludwig Köpfliche in 'L'orgoglio e la pietà'. Köpfliche is a serene experimenter, 'capace di lasciare un brano del proprio cuore in fondo a una esperienza, pur di notare qualche sensazione nuova, o rara, o complessa', who 'constructs' emotions 'a furia di critica' (Federico De Roberto, 'L'orgoglio e la pietà', in Federico De Roberto, *Documenti umani*, 7th edn (Milan: Galli, 1898), pp. 281-93 (p. 283)). Perhaps, with Montani, Capuana self-consciously plays with his public image, inviting us to look behind the celebrated serenity. Given, too, the similarities that we have noted between Montani's literary production and Capuana's writings of the 1880s, one may detect an element of self-portraiture in this examination of a writer in transition.

[96] In the late nineteenth century, it was widely held that Schopenhauer advocated suicide at a moment of supreme joy. The currency of this interpretation is, in fact, illustrated by Lucini's review of *La sfinge*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Schopenhauer, of course, condemned suicide as the supreme manifestation of the will to life.

[97] For the 'pity and pardon' topos, see René-Pierre Colin, *Zola: renégats et alliés* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1988), pp. 247-52. Colin cites, in particular, Lucien Descaves's *Les Emmurés* (1894) and Paul Margueritte's *La tourmente* (1893). Equally evident examples, however, are Bourget's *Cruelle énigme* (1885) and *Un crime d'amour* (1886). The topos finds its clearest Italian

expression in the indulgence of D'Annunzio's Giovanni Episcopo for his faithless wife.

[98] Montani's insight into Fulvia undermines Pirandello's reading of the suicide. Like Pagliaro, he posits an intolerable revelation at the novel's conclusion: Montani is maddened by Fulvia's confession that she has sought to mystify. Yet here Montani already recognizes her 'smania del nuovo, del raro' (Capuana, *La sfinge*, cit., p. 488). He is long aware of her obeisance to decadent myths of womanhood.

[99] Marchese, p. 105, Davies, p. 102.

[100] Pagliaro, 'Aspetti tecnici e continuità tematica ne *La Sfinge* di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 69.

[101] Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 108, Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 2908, Madrignani, p. 249, Storti Abate, p. 134, Davies, p. 103. Only Pirandello judges it 'nuova ed originale, come mezzo d'arte' (Pirandello, '*La sfinge*', cit., p. 88).

[102] One should not, however, discount the possibility that environmental and hereditary factors -- Ernesto's suicide, the recent loss of his mother, the death through 'miseria' of the painter Rocchi, perhaps even the death through despair of Fulvia's bankrupt husband -- contribute to Montani's suicide.

# CHAPTER IV

## *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*: Myth and History in Post-*Risorgimento* Sicily

### 1. *Critical Approaches to 'Il marchese di Roccaverdina'*

In *Profumo* and *La sfinge*, we have plotted a critique of both idealist and positivist ideologies. Yet Capuana's fourth novel, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* (1901), has generally been characterized as either an espousal of the former or a continued defence of the latter.

Among critics who detect neo-idealist traits, some praise the transcendence of determinist psychology while others regret further evidence of Capuana's 'involuzione' in a reversion to Catholic bourgeois morality. All of these agree, however, that will and conscience first emerge as determining factors in *Profumo* and assume steadily greater importance in Capuana's later novels.

Our study of *La sfinge* shows, conversely, that Capuana increasingly queries the possibility of transcending environmental and ideological conditioning. Accordingly, one cannot posit a smooth transition to a neo-idealist stance. Critics who perceive neo-idealist optimism in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* fail to examine its relationship to *La sfinge* and thus to perceive that each novel constitutes a response to historically specific ideological crisis and presents a critique of both idealist and positivist dualism.

For those critics, on the other hand, who read *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* as a naturalist case-study, Capuana finally succeeds in fusing protagonists and milieu into a dynamic continuum. They argue that the *marchese*'s crime is convincingly rooted in a feudal society, and that his remorse is a physiological rather than moral phenomenon.

A naturalist reading of the text, however, raises three major problems. Firstly, one must reconcile the *marchese*'s religious crisis with his thralldom to feudal ideology and explain how a quasi-medieval community produces his sparring partners, the atheist Pergola and the spiritualist Aquilante. Secondly, one must again define the relationship between *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* and *La sfinge.* We have seen that *La sfinge* has been read both as a positivist study of pathological passion and as a critique of decadent ideology from a positivist perspective. Yet those recent critics who consider *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* naturalistic perceive neo-idealist elements in *Profumo* and concessions to decadentism in *La sfinge*. How, then, do they explain an apparent return to naturalism? Thirdly, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is published in 1901. If read as a naturalist case-study, it must appear puzzlingly anachronistic.

In this chapter, we shall first take a closer look at critical responses to *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* in order to see how these three problems have been confronted. Turning to the novel itself, we shall then seek to locate the *marchese*'s spiritual crisis within a precise ideological context and explore the possibility of reconciling naturalist and neo-idealist readings of the novel. Concentrating on characters and episodes often judged digressive, we shall uncover a structured network of ethnological, mythical, hagiographical, and literary allusion. This will reveal an extension of the critique of dualistic ideologies presented in *Profumo* and *La sfinge*. We shall see that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is both a coherent step in a continuing discourse and very much a novel of its day.

* * * *

In our survey of critical approaches to *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, we shall concentrate on those which stress its naturalist traits. As these generally, however, engage with earlier readings of the novel as an idealist work, we must firstly briefly summarize the pro-idealist case.

a) *'Il marchese di Roccaverdina' Viewed as an Idealist Novel*

Critics have detected idealist elements in two areas of the novel. Some underline the capacity of certain characters to transcend their environment, while others perceive, in the *marchese*'s descent into madness, an anti-positivist study of the universal moral category of guilt.

The first thesis originates with Croce (1905) for whom Capuana finally permits himself to be 'mosso da affetto', creating in Agrippina Solmo, the *marchese*'s peasant lover, a 'simbolo vivente di sconfinata dedizione'.[1] Croce's analysis is most fully developed by Vetro (1922) who likewise detects in Agrippina a selfless passion which 'spiritualizes' a potentially sordid relationship with her feudal master. The priest *don* Silvio, who takes the *marchese*'s sins upon himself, is another repository of the ideal. For Vetro, however, the novel is ultimately marred by remnants of the psychopathological case-study. The *marchese*'s passion is an abnormal, exceptional case. Capuana attempts to persuade us that the *marchese* too may transcend hereditary and environmental determinants, but Vetro is unpersuaded by the account of his religious and ideological crisis. We cannot, he argues, accept that an uncultivated figure, brought up amongst slavish peasants, should, in the wake of his crime, develop an interest in theological and philosophical debate. The *marchese*'s spiritual questioning appears tangential to a mental collapse which, for Vetro, originates in jealous mania rather than remorse.[2] Croce and Vetro, then, locate the ideal in the self-sacrificing Agrippina and *don* Silvio, but consider the *marchese* to be resolved in terms of positivist psychology.

A second group of critics argue, conversely, that Capuana charts a moral crisis. For Luigi Tonelli (1928) and Attilio Momigliano (1955), the novel unfolds not in socio-economic reality but against a neutral, universal backdrop. The guiding influence is not Verga but Dostoevsky as Capuana derives his ethical theme from *Crime and Punishment.* In their analysis, the *marchese*, like Raskolnikov, commits murder in the belief that he stands above herd morality

and is likewise humbled by his conscience.[3] This thesis has subsequently been adopted by Caccia (1962) for whom, nonetheless, a shabbily provincial milieu undermines the tale's universality, and by Villa (1974) who acknowledges the influence of class-prejudices upon the *marchese* but insists that these are overcome in a process of redemption.[4]

Many recent commentators, however, have adopted the arguments of Tonelli and Momigliano but turned them against Capuana. Madrignani (1970) regrets that the *marchese*'s behaviour has no physiological or hereditary basis. Capuana renounces the psychopathological case study for a 'dramma di coscienza', embarking upon 'una nebulosa ricerca di un dramma spirituale ad ogni costo'.[5] Christian bourgeois morality is elevated to 'una gamma di valori "eterni"', and *don* Silvio inherits the authority previously invested in the medical profession. The *marchese*'s death is 'un lieto fine', appeasing the conscience of both protagonist and reader, in which the spirit 'riscatta le colpe sulla carne del "peccatore"'. With its rejection of physiological man, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* represents 'un rinnegamento del positivismo'.[6] Madrignani locates vestiges of *verismo* in Capuana's attempt to imitate the social fresco of *Mastro-don Gesualdo* but feels that an over-exploited milieu merely produces 'un frutto fuori stagione'.[7]

Madrignani's analysis informs much subsequent criticism,[8] and is furthest developed by Storti Abate (1989), for whom the soul replaces the psyche as Capuana's object of study. She traces the *marchese*'s madness not to physiological factors but to an irrepressible religious sentiment. The triumph of justice, whether divine or natural, evokes the uplifting production of Fogazzaro and Bourget rather than Dostoevsky. Abandoning psychological naturalism for neo-Catholicism, Capuana nonetheless, for Storti Abate, lacks the power and conviction of a genuinely religious author.[9]

For Madrignani and Storti Abate, positivist psychology gives way to Catholic neo-idealism, and the novel represents a further step

in Capuana's 'involuzione'. Residual *verista* elements are judged merely anachronistic. How, then, do commentators who emphasize the novel's naturalist traits confront these criticisms and the assertion of earlier critics that certain characters transcend their environment?

b) *'Il marchese di Roccaverdina' Viewed as a Naturalist Novel*

Firstly, some Croceian critics argue that not only the *marchese* but Agrippina is bound by heredity and milieu. For Ferdinando Giannessi (1961), she is not the embodiment of self-sacrifice but of feudal servility. Her passion is mere idolatry. The impersonal method, however, prevents Capuana from empathizing with his characters and from achieving a real understanding of the human cost of feudal ideology. His naturalist narrative technique and deterministic psychological analysis must, even in 1901, have appeared 'un po' vecchio e stanco'.[10] This approach is most fully developed by Scalia (1952) for whom Agrippina is a brutalized serf and the *marchese* the wooden personification of feudal pundonor. His remorse is not provoked by the awakening of his conscience but is a purely physiological reaction. He does not regret his crime but the loss of his peace of mind. In Scalia's analysis, the nerve-driven descent into madness is consistent with positivist criminology for which crime is inevitably its own punishment. The *marchese*'s principal literary forerunner is not Raskolnikov but Laurent, protagonist of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*.[11]

For these commentators, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is unequivocally a 'frutto fuori stagione'. They have little difficulty in locating it within Capuana's narrative itinerary, arguing that he never strays from dogmatic naturalism. Some more recent critics have sustained a similar thesis from a position more favourable to *verista* poetics. Cavalli Pasini (1982) argues that the *marchese*'s fate is entirely consistent with Lombrosian criminology. Surrendering to 'istinti deteriori', the criminal condems himself to 'la morte psichica'.[12] Crime ends in redemptive insanity. Cavalli Pasini thus stresses the idealism present within positivism. Folco Portinari (1976) likewise argues that Capuana's faith in self-

regulating nature and disregard for socio-historical forces are quintessentially positivist. The *marchese*'s crime is, for Portinari, presented as a disturbance of the natural order. Nature, in the form of the *marchese*'s psyche, punishes the transgression and assumes responsibility for historical events. The crime itself derives not from feudal abuses but a degeneration of the Roccaverdina stock.[13]

Other critics, however, have argued that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* represents an authentic critique of feudalism in which human behaviour is shaped primarily by socio-historical forces. Federico De Roberto (1901) pre-empts Giannessi and Scalia in judging Agrippina a primitive, brutalized serf. This does not, though, indicate Capuana's thralldom to deterministic psychology but his sensitivity to the moral degradation of the exploited Sicilian peasantry.[14] Enrico Panzacchi (1901), another of the novel's original reviewers, also stresses the evocation of a degraded milieu. Capuana portrays 'tutto quello che hanno di tenacemente arretrato le persone e i costumi nella povera plebe servile, nei borghesi invidiosi e malefici, nei signori orgogliosi, ignoranti e di una andatura ancora feudale'.[15] The *marchese*'s murderous arrogance is, for Panzacchi, a cultural construct rather than a pathological case.

In the following half-century few Croceian critics credit Capuana with an authentic interest in Sicilian socio-economic reality. Only in the 1960s do late Croceian commentators perceive in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* a document of feudal Sicily. Arturo Pompeati (1962) follows Croce and Vetro in judging Agrippina a repository of 'poesia'. Yet, in his reading, her passion does not transcend her environment. It represents rather 'la triste poesia di una servitù che tramuta in idolo il proprio tiranno, che idealizza, per un bisogno di dignità interiore, il padrone brutale e dispotico'.[16] The novel is primarily a critique of feudal structures. Like Vetro, however, Pompeati sees a fundamental contradiction between the *marchese*'s feudal upbringing and the complexity of his ethical crisis. Here, he feels that Capuana indulges in facile idealism.

Giuseppe Marchese (1964) also maintains that the feudal brutality of the *marchese*'s crime is at odds with the subtlety of his remorse, and that Agrippina is both the novel's poetic core and the personification of servile idolatry. For Marchese, however, the true interest of the novel lies in the 'volontà di riscossa' of its peasant protagonists who display 'una ricerca [...] istintiva e irrazionale' for 'un più alto senso di giustizia'.[17] There is evidence of a semi-conscious effort to transcend feudal restrictions and to effect political change in Santi Dimauro's reluctance to surrender his small-holding, in *don* Silvio's refusal to absolve the *marchese*, in *don* Aquilante's persistence in investigating the murder, and, vitally, in the readiness of Rocco and Agrippina to consummate their marriage in defiance of the *marchese*. The drought which blights Ràbbato is a symbol of feudal oppression, and the people's yearning for rain corresponds to 'un senso atavico di attesa'.[18]

Curiously, however, Marchese fails to identify the protagonist's religious doubts and political ambition as further symptoms of the crisis of feudalism, judging them tangential to a case-study of murderous jealousy. For Marchese, Capuana fails to perceive the socio-historical tensions intrinsic to his subject. Ignorant of 'ogni istanza sociale moderna', he seeks merely to trigger the *marchese*'s remorse.[19] Impersonally observing a milieu, he *unwittingly* documents the birth of a political ideal.

For Marchese, the novel remains a work of superannuated naturalism which acquires importance as a historical document despite its author's exclusive interest in positivist pathology. In the last twenty-five years, however, a number of critics have argued that Capuana *consciously* presents a critique of Sicilian socio-economic reality. They seek to refute Madrignani's claim that Capuana espouses neo-idealism and to restore the novel to the naturalist canon. Many, however, concede that it may represent 'un frutto fuori stagione'. Thus, for Gino Pampaloni (1972), it is a convincing study of feudally conditioned jealousy which nonetheless resembles an anonymous sample of copy-book *verismo*.[21] Alfredo Stussi (1989) too regrets the novel's 'carattere

retrospettivo', visible both in its over-exploited setting and in an 'impasto linguistico' which represents 'la ricapitolazione per campioni dei problemi, delle soluzioni, delle incertezze di tutta la carriera dello scrittore'.[22]

Davies (1979) alone seeks to present the novel as both the naturalist critique of a milieu and a work of its day. She argues that, unlike Capuana's earlier protagonists, the *marchese*'s behaviour derives exclusively from his social position. In Ràbbato, Capuana depicts a collective experience characterized by unquestioning respect for the feudal hierarchy. He catalogues local religious practices not through ethnological zeal but to evoke a context in which the feudal aristocracy appropriates the deity. The *marchese*'s crime is thus shown to originate in assumptions of privilege.

For Davies, Capuana's central theme is the decline of feudalism, and, unlike earlier critics, she maintains that he is fully aware of the novel's ideological content. Following Marchese, she detects elements of crisis in the rebellion of Santi Dimauro, *don* Silvio, and *don* Aquilante. She insists, however, that the *marchese* too displays an ambivalent attitude towards his feudal inheritance. He observes feudal law in refusing to marry a peasant mistress but contravenes it in his monogamy. He treats Rocco Criscione variously as feudal factotum and business partner. He abandons his forefathers' love of hunting for progressive farming. Unlike his tyrannical predecessors, he is fearful of the law. For Davies, the novel concludes not with Madrignani's symbolic purging of the social order but with its collapse. The demise of feudalism is foreshadowed by the rebellion of the *marchese*'s wife and by the deaths of the matriarchal *baronessa di Lagomorto* and the faithful nurse *mamma* Grazia.[23]

In Davies's view, Madrignani overstates Capuana's concessions to *fine secolo* idealism. It is not Christian conscience which triggers the *marchese*'s remorse but an inability 'to embody thoroughly the tenets of his race'.[24] Nor is his religious and ethical crisis a sop to contemporary taste. The essays *Spiritismo?* (1884) and *Mondo*

*occulto* (1896) reveal Capuana's passionate interest in parapsychology and spiritualism, and the verse of *Semiritmi* (1888) records religious anxieties.[25] For Davies, Capuana thus deals with questions that have long engaged him. She appears reluctant, however, to situate the *marchese*'s metaphysical doubts within his socio-historical context. Ultimately, she seems to share Vetro's perception of a contradiction between the *marchese*'s rustic upbringing and his philosophical quest.

However powerful Capuana's critique of feudalism, Davies nonetheless acknowledges that it may appear thematically dated. Within a European context, she concedes that the novel resembles Madrignani's 'frutto fuori stagione'. Formally, however, she perceives an anticipation of modernism. Rigorously applying impersonality, Capuana abdicates the role of bourgeois author. In Davies's analysis, diegetic information is conveyed through internally focalized analepsis, through the mediation of an anonymous representative of Ràbbato, or through theatrical dialogue. Even the analeptic passages, however, unfold as drama within the *marchese*'s conscience. Memory invades the narrative present, leaving no room for reaction and the intrusive narrative techniques that this might demand. For Davies, Capuana's theatrical mimesis of reality pre-empts Pirandello.[26]

Davies's formal analysis usefully stresses the predominance of analepsis in a narrative often characterized as a linear chronicle. Regrettably, it has three weaknesses. Firstly, Davies repeats an error made in her critique of *Giacinta*. She argues that Capuana's theatrical technique ultimately proves inflexible, and that only towards the beginning of chapters does Capuana successfully evade monologic omniscience. Elsewhere he betrays himself through clumsy plunges into his characters' psyches.[27] Here Davies again mistakes a canonical realist framing device -- where external focalization frames a zero-focalized or internally focalized narrative -- for an abortive attempt to surrender narratorial authority. She thus judges explicit psychological insight not the narrative norm but an admission of failure. Secondly, she establishes no relationship between the novel's

formal innovations and its themes. In her critique, an anachronistic study of feudalism appears an indifferent vehicle for narrative experimentation. Thirdly, having detected a compromise with neo-idealism in *Profumo* and *La sfinge*, she fails to explain why Capuana should return to naturalist psychology in his following novel.

Other critics who stress formal innovation seek to evade these pitfalls. Pirandello (1901) locates the novel's originality in its very mixture of modes of focalization. In his analysis, Capuana achieves a fusion of the 'metodo psicologico' and the 'metodo naturalista',[28] uniting the two strands of his narrative production: the internally focalized case-studies of *Le appassionate* and the externally focalized regionalist sketches of *Le paesane*. This analysis takes its lead from Capuana himself, who, discussing his forthcoming novel with Ojetti in 1894, expresses his wish to marry 'i due metodi del naturalismo fisiologico e psicologico'.[29] *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* would thus represent a logical step in the evolution of Capuana's narrative technique. One might nonetheless feel that, by the time of the novel's publication, a discussion of the twin methods of naturalism appears anachronistic. The necessity of varying focalization and of marrying internal and external observation is formulated, after all, by Maupassant in his preface to *Pierre et Jean* in 1888. As we shall see, there is, besides, little physiological analysis or external observation of Sicilian life in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*. Outwith framing passages, the narrative is filtered through the protagonist's consciousness.

Pirandello is careful not to overstate the novel's theoretical basis. The marriage of the two narrative methods occurs spontaneously 'per la natura stessa del soggetto preso a trattare'.[30] Capuana demonstrates how protagonists 'naturalmente prodotti e determinati dal loro proprio ambiente' may, in certain circumstances, nurture 'sentimenti elevati' and transcend conditioning. Focalization is increasingly internalized as they achieve freedom of consciousness. Capuana's narrative technique, then, reflects a renunciation of the rigid determinism which Pirandello still perceives in *La sfinge*. The novel is not, however,

for Pirandello, a work of Catholic neo-idealism. He argues that Capuana primarily portrays not remorse but the physiological effects of the *marchese*'s fear of punishment. In Pirandello's analysis, the protagonist's ideological and religious crisis again appears tangential to a study in positivist criminology.[31]

Other critics, conversely, argue that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* formally departs from Capuana's earlier production in the very rigidity with which *verista* impersonality is applied. Giulio Ferroni (1991) perceives a mark of Capuana's growing hostility to the contemporary 'isms' in the novel's polemical 'naturalismo depurato',[32] while Portinari detects the hardening of *verismo* into an 'ortodossia' in the face of the heresies proposed by D'Annunzio, Pirandello, Svevo, and the futurists.[33] Again, however, both largely discount the *marchese*'s moral quest.

To date, only Sergio Gilardino (1989) has linked the novel's formal innovations with its protagonist's ideological crisis. For Gilardino, the *marchese* is not a feudal throwback but a frustrated *superuomo*, a hero not of *verismo* but of decadentism.[34]

c) *'Il marchese di Roccaverdina' Viewed as a Decadent Novel*

Gilardino suggests a parallel with Bourget's *Le Disciple*. Both Robert Greslou and the *marchese* conduct psychological experiments on themselves and others. Both divide humanity into 'eletti' and 'comuni' and place themselves above herd morality.[35] Yet, incapable of mastering the passions which they unleash and tormented by a remorse which contradicts their philosophy, both fall 'da un ostentato dominio di sé al deterioramento delle facoltà psichiche'.[36]

Gilardino equally notes formal affinities between the two novels. In each there is 'uno sdoppiamento dei personaggi'.[37] An 'io metafisico' obsessively transforms external data into 'dati della coscienza'. The active ego becomes a 'residuo', a 'superstite', as the mind is increasingly divorced from immediate reality. The analeptic structure of both novels reflects this fractured rapport

between 'avvenimenti esterni' and the 'reazioni immediate dei soggetti'.[38] In this light, the *marchese*'s political and administrative projects no longer appear tangential. They are an attempt to recover synchrony.

Gilardino not only stresses the centrality of analepsis to *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* but note's Capuana's use of *mise en abîme*. He observes that much diegetic information is relayed by characters who function primarily as messengers. Again, he draws a parallel with Robert Greslou's inserted confession in *Le Disciple*. For Gilardino, both Capuana and Bourget seek to eliminate the intrusive omniscient author of the bourgeois tradition. Yet Gilardino suggests that Capuana does not directly learn from Bourget but that both arrive independently at similar narrative solutions.[39] We have already, however, observed Capuana's thematic debt to *Le Disciple* in *Confessione*, *Fausto Bragia*, and *La sfinge*. We shall, moreover, re-encounter the experimenter *in anima vili* in Capuana's twentieth-century production. Bourget's *formal* influence cannot, then, be discounted.

With its stress upon 'una realtà interiore', *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* represents, for Gilardino, 'un rigetto pressoché totale delle tesi naturaliste e sperimentaliste zoliane'.[40] This does not, however, signal a dramatic break with an earlier naturalist production. Gilardino argues that Capuana filters external reality through his protagonists' consciousness throughout his narrative career. Here Capuana finally sheds the last of his naturalist baggage. Gilardino's formal and thematic analysis convincingly places *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* within a *fine secolo* context. We must, however, feel that he discounts the impact of carefully evoked socio-economic and hereditary factors upon the protagonist's consciousness, and upon the form of both his crime and self-punishment.

* * * *

Gilardino is one of few critics who perceive no vestiges of naturalism in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*. Our overview of the

novel's critical history reveals that the majority of commentators note the co-existence of naturalist and post-positivist elements. For most, these fail to merge into a coherent whole. For those idealist critics who stress the capacity of certain characters to transcend their environment, the *marchese* himself is resolved in predominantly behaviouristic terms, and his moral and ideological crisis is at odds with a rigidly determined psyche. Those, conversely, who perceive the ahistorical study of a moral category judge the *verista* evocation of a milieu anachronistic.

Other critics have emphasized the naturalistic charting of environmental and hereditary factors, tracing the *marchese*'s crime to the institutionalized thought-forms of feudalism or to racial degeneration. For these, his descent into madness is not a sop to bourgeois morality but consistent with positivist criminology. Naturalist critiques of the novel, however, struggle to locate it within both Capuana's narrative itinerary and a *fine secolo* literary context. For some commentators, Capuana adheres staunchly to naturalist principles throughout his narrative career and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is thus a rearguard action. For others, it is represents a *return* to dogmatic naturalism in the face of contending post-positivist schools. A number of critics posit an essentially formal departure from naturalism. Thus Pirandello perceives a marriage of *psychologiste* and *verista* modes of focalization but largely discounts the *marchese*'s ethical and spiritual anxieties. Davies alone proposes these as evidence of Capuana's authentic participation in a post-positivist ideological crisis. Yet, in her analysis, they appear a mere vehicle for formal innovation.

In our study of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* we shall seek to reconcile the perceived positivist and idealist elements of the novel by placing the protagonist's crisis of conscience within a socio-historical context. We shall attempt equally to link its formal structures with the ideological conflicts suffered by both the *marchese* and the villagers of Ràbbato. We shall find that the novel is both a coherent sequel to Capuana's earlier fiction and an

ambitious contribution to the literary and political debate of its day.

## 2. *'Il marchese di Roccaverdina'*

*Il marchese di Roccaverdina* may be divided into four sequences. Chapters 1-9 cover the investigation into the death of Rocco Criscione and the wrongful conviction of Neli Casaccio. They culminate with the *marchese*'s confession to *don* Silvio that he is the murderer. In Chapters 10-17, the *marchese* evades the promptings of his conscience by entering public life, becoming engaged to Zòsima, and embracing Pergola's atheism. This section ends with the sacrificial deaths of *don* Silvio and Neli Casaccio. Chapters 18-26 chart the failure of the *marchese*'s marriage and political ambitions. Pergola's death-bed conversion revives his religious anxieties, causing him to seek solace in atavistic pride. In Chapters 27-34, he seeks renewal through contact with his native soil. The failure of this final attempt to still an inner voice triggers his descent into madness.

### a) *Chapters 1-9*

The first section of the novel initially appears to present the protagonists naturalistically as the product of socio-historical forces. We shall detect, however, Classical and Christian subtexts which imply conflicting mythical readings of the *marchese*'s crime and Sicilian history. In the former, the *marchese* appears doomed to re-enact ancestral abuses. The latter hold out the possibility of redemption both for the protagonist and for his subjects.

#### *Socio-Historical Factors and Naturalist Techniques*

There is much in Chapters 1-9 to support Davies's contention that the *marchese* is the product of an age of transition. He appears torn between conflicting feudal and bourgeois impulses. In some respects, he unequivocally conforms to ancestral type. A powerful sense of kinship with his feudatories is matched by a

readiness to abuse power. He bullies potentially incriminating witnesses and seeks to buy *don* Silvio's silence.

Elsewhere, however, he appears prepared to embrace change. He shuns his indolent fellow nobles and pursues an active interest in the technological and agricultural developments which they fear. His *palazzo* is an amalgam of Gothic pile and elegant town-house. His struggle between conflicting historical forces is most clearly revealed, however, in his relationships with Rocco Criscione and Agrippina Solmo.

Rocco Criscione is alternately slavish factotum and professional peer. On one hand, he uncomplainingly marries his master's cast-off. On the other, he is, for the *marchese*'s feudatories, 'un altro padrone'.[41] His promotion from retainer to plenipotentiary provokes scandal in Ràbbato.

Equally puzzling to his fellow citizens is the *marchese*'s monogamous attachment to Agrippina. The descendant of a line of *donnaioli* installs her as mistress of the house and treats her 'meglio di una signora' (p. 44). Again, however, he is ultimately unable to renounce feudal ideology. He accepts that only 'pregiudizi sociali' (p. 99) prevent him from marrying Agrippina. These, however, are often 'più potenti delle stesse leggi umane e divine'. The *marchese*, then, is partly aware of a conflict between feudal ideology and both Christian and humanist values. If he professes himself incapable of shedding atavistic prejudice, he is clearly not the crudely determined rustic posited by critics such as Vetro and Marchese.

It has not been remarked, however, that a conflict between historical forces is visible not only in the *marchese* but in Agrippina and *don* Silvio, the figures most frequently interpreted in an idealist key. Critics have often underlined Agrippina's feudal servility, noting that she considers the *marchese* 'più che amante, padrone' (p. 59) and habitually addresses him as 'voscenza'. Yet one must not overlook her active role in the administration of the Roccaverdina household. She operates 'da vera padrona, con le

chiavi della dispensa o del magazzino alla cintola' (p. 58). She is not, then, altogether the disinterested figure of Croceian tradition.

Nor is *don* Silvio the unwavering defender of Christian values. It is only gradually that he refuses to play accomplice to the aristocracy. His first appearance, in Chapter 3, is marked by the comical awe which he feels before the *baronessa di Lagomorto*. A 'sentimento di ammirazione' (p. 48) renders him even 'più timido del solito'. As the *baronessa* argues for a Christianity which serves the interests of the aristocracy, the meekness of *don* Silvio's objections reveals residual servility. As the *baronessa*'s blasphemies become steadily more outrageous, he descends into embarrassed silence.

Over Chapters 1-9 *don* Silvio moves from silent disapproval to a rejection of his feudal role, a process culminating in his refusal to grant the *marchese* absolution. He is not, then, *ipso facto* evidence that Capuana rejects socio-historical analysis for Christian values. Both *don* Silvio and Agrippina are products of historical change.

Thus far, Capuana's analysis must appear consistent with naturalist practice. The *marchese* represents the confluence of moment and milieu. Genetic factors too may govern his behaviour. The *baronessa* repeatedly laments the deterioration of the Roccaverdina stock, opining that its recent representatives suffer from a 'cervello bacato' (p. 54). A formidable businesswoman, she considers herself a throwback to healthier times, but, significantly, she appears barren.

The Roccaverdina, then, belong to an exhausted class which neglects its lands and duties for private passions. Yet we have seen that the impact of hereditary factors is questioned in *Giacinta* and negligible in *Profumo* and *La sfinge*. The significance of race in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* might, then, appear puzzling. If we turn, however, to Capuana's shorter fiction, we find that he consistently embraces the myth of racial degeneration when dealing with the feudal aristocracy.

In 'Il barone di Fontane Asciutte' (1897), for example, the protagonist is victim to an inherited mania. Through obsessive litigation, he seeks to win back lands lost by the criminal recklessness of wild-living predecessors. His sons meanwhile cultivate expensive hobbies.[42] In other tales, the contemporary aristocracy sinks into the criminal lethargy criticized in 'Il benefattore' (1900) or the absurdly ritualized behaviour satirized in 'Un eccentrico' (1897), where the protagonist reduces his existence to meticulously timed routines.[43] The recklessness of a previous generation is portrayed in 'Don Ponzio' (1898), where a tyrannous wastrel squanders his inheritance.[44]

It would be a mistake to see in these tales a decadent depiction of the aristocracy. An identical analysis in visible in an early *novella* like 'Storia fosca' (1880) where the young wife of an enfeebled nobleman seduces her degenerate, effeminate stepson. Similarly, the cretinous *conte* Grippa di San Celso is the only character in *Giacinta* resolved in entirely racial terms. A scion of the pro-*Risorgimento* landed bourgeoisie, Capuana perennially depicts a genetically exhausted aristocracy. The naturalistic analysis of the *marchese* is entirely consistent with his previous production.

Naturalist psychology may initially appear to be matched by the rigorous impersonality posited by Davies. The predominant technique of the opening chapters is theatrical external focalization. In Chapter 1, a door opens, much as a curtain might be raised, to reveal the *marchese* whose back is turned. Once his chamber is described with the conciseness of a stage-direction, a servant announces the arrival of his advocate, *don* Aquilante. The *marchese* turns to the door (and to the narrator) 'accigliato, mordendosi le labbra, affondando le dita tra i folti capelli neri' (p. 32). Narratorial distance is maintained through modalizing locutions such as 'si sarebbe detto che quella visita [...] non riuscisse molto gradita al marchese'.

Diegetic information is essentially conveyed through dialogue. Reporting the arrest of Rocco Criscione, *don* Aquilante practically

re-enacts the entire scene. The listening *marchese*'s nervous tics are heavily underlined, leaving little doubt as to his guilt.[45] At the chapter's conclusion, Aquilante's report is interrupted by 'noises off' as Neli Casaccio's wife learns of his arrest. He and the *marchese* go to the window and comment upon the 'off-stage' action.

Even in this opening chapter, however, external focalization is not rigidly observed. We are directly informed of the protagonist's social positions, and there are a number of glimpses into the *marchese*'s psyche. The narrator informs us, for example, of his intolerance of gaslight and distrust of Aquilante's spiritualism. As in *Giacinta*, there is thus an implicit promise that we shall be granted full psychological insight. External focalization is a framing technique rather than a rapidly abandoned experiment in narratorial disassociation.

In the following chapters, we find not only internally focalized passages but the sporadic appearance of a zero-focalizing narrator. In Chapter 2, for example, the narrator distances himself from the 'vocabolario poco indulgente' (p. 44) employed 'colà' in Ràbbato. This is a voice familiar from the increasingly anecdotal later *paesane*, where an expatriate narrator glosses local idiosyncrasies for a continental audience. From the 1890s onwards, Capuana's fiction follows two parallel formal paths. Where zero focalization dominates in his *paesane*, he elsewhere multiplies diegetic levels. In *Anime a nudo* (1900), *Delitto ideale* (1902), and *Coscienze* (1905), narrative is inserted within narrative, and the primary narrator merely sets into motion dialogue between potential secondary narrators. In *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, Capuana combines these two techniques with the internal focalization employed in his earlier novels.

If the withholding of psychological insight is essentially a framing device, dialogue nonetheless remains the *primary* source of diegetic information throughout the novel. Events are brought onto the stage of Ràbbato by secondary protagonists who, like Aquilante in Chapter 1, perform the function of messenger. Little

occurs directly before the reader's eyes. Capuana, in fact, observes the classical unities. Ràbbato remains a static foreground. It is not a theatre of action but a forum upon which events are commented and judged.

This is not merely an attempt to lend his novel the gravitas of Greek tragedy. Capuana invites us, rather, to draw a structural parallel between Ràbbato and the Greek city-states. For all his aristocratic arrogance, the *marchese* zealously courts popular approval. He regularly gives 'udienze' on the castle esplanade where he seeks to justify his actions and opinions. The paternal attitude that he displays towards his feudal audience bears comparison with that of a figure like Oedipus who addresses his subjects as 'my children'.

The *marchese* most conspicuously appeals to the forum of Ràbbato in Chapter 6. Here, in the *Casino dei signori*, he describes the trial of Neli Casaccio to an audience of fellow-nobles and feudatories. So intense and so detailed is his report, however, that it becomes a re-enactment. He repeats the closing speeches verbatim as if his listeners 'fossero i giurati che dovevano giudicare' (p. 73).

Capuana does not directly represent the wrongful condemnation of Neli Casaccio but portrays the *marchese* addressing the sole jury whose competence he recognizes. Throughout his account of trial, the protagonist strikingly refers to himself in the third person as 'il marchese di Roccaverdina'. It has not been remarked that only twice in a novel devoted almost exclusively to his psychic disintegration is the *marchese* called by his personal name. To the narrator, he is always 'il marchese'. He defines himself, then, in terms of a hereditary public role.

Yet the *marchese*'s ambiguous treatment of Rocco and Agrippina and his hesitation between feudal and bourgeois social models suggest that he can no longer fully embody this role. He has developed a self-consciousness which increasingly divorces him from a feudal collectivity. The murder of Rocco accelerates this

process, exiling the *marchese* in an unfamiliar private sphere and forcing him to examine an inherited ideology.

The structural parallels that we have observed between *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* and Greek tragedy alert us to thematic analogies.[46] These are the first hint that the naturalist reading of Sicilian history that we have traced thus far is counterbalanced by a series of mythical interpretations.

*Classical Subtexts: Oedipus and Paris*

There are, in particular, echoes of *Oedipus Rex*.. Ràbbato is devastated by a drought which the populace repeatedly interpret as a 'castigo di Dio', believing that divine wrath is provoked by the unsolved murder of Rocco Criscione. The community would thus be punished for a crime committed by its leader. Like Oedipus, the *marchese* organizes an investigation into a murder for which he is responsible.

We might re-examine the figure of the spiritualist Aquilante in this light. As he communes with the spirit of Rocco Criscione, he may recall the seer Tiresias. The *marchese* certainly fears that he is in possession of his secret. There may, then, be more to Aquilante's detailed report in Chapter 1 than the observation of the dramatic unities. He reconstructs scenes and dialogues with hallucinatory clarity. He is habitually portrayed with eyes closed, as if wrapped in inner vision. His name, of course, contains an allusion to the eagle's visual powers. We should recall that in Sicilian folk-tradition, the eagle is the guardian of persecuted youth.[47] It is hinted that Aquilante is, like Tiresias, sole possessor of the ruler's secret and potential champion of the innocent.

A further possible analogy with *Oedipus Rex* is the despairing cry of Neli Casaccio's wife upon her husband's arrest. Her words 'Figlio!.. Figlio mio!' (p. 39) are directed at Neli and will be echoed by Agrippina Solmo before the *marchese*'s corpse. This is a Sicilianism but, given the thematic and structural parallels with Sophocles' play, one cannot discount the Oedipal overtones. We

shall see, as the novel develops, that Agrippina is allegorically portrayed as the protagonist's mother.

Finally, it is implied that, like Oedipus, the *marchese* is punished not for an isolated crime but for ancestral guilt. The earthquake which had, in the seventeenth century, devastated the original Roccaverdina castle is locally interpreted as a divine punishment. The title of the matriarchal *baronessa di Lagomorto* contains a transparent allusion to the punitive drought.

A naturalist analysis of history, where the *marchese* is the victim of genetic deterioration and socio-economic forces, is complimented by a mythical reading, where the *marchese* repeats the crimes of his forefathers. In each, the *marchese*'s end is predetermined. The almost exclusive use of his title points to the fatal, cyclical re-enactment of a role.[48]

A further classical allusion, however, implies that the circle may be broken. In Chapter 7, the *baronessa* suggests that the *marchese* marry his childhood sweetheart Zòsima. The *marchese* glimpses the possibility of placating his conscience through an active, married life and of finally breaking Agrippina's hold upon him. As he considers the suggestion in the *baronessa*'s palace, his attention is caught by a painting of the Judgment of Paris. A number of analogies might be drawn between the *marchese* and Paris. We shall see that, like Paris, the *marchese* shuns the gifts which might render him the active redeemer of his stock in favour of private passion and that, just as Paris seizes Helen, he plunders in Agrippina one dear to the Gods. Both bring ruin on their houses through an underhand killing. Facing retribution, the fatally wounded Paris returns to his abandonned wife Oenome in search of a cure while the *marchese* returns to the jilted Zòsima.

The painting warns, then, that marriage offers no redemption. It also suggests, however, that the *marchese* is not solely the butt of divine wrath. Like Paris, he may too have a divine protectress. Allusions to the myth of Paris function, in fact, as a bridge between the predetermination of the Oedipal subtext and

suggestions that the *marchese* may achieve redemption. At the heart of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* lies a tension between Classical and Christian myth. Where we have thus far charted hints that the *marchese* must fatally expiate ancestral guilt, we shall now examine a Christian subtext which suggests that the *marchese* might yet redeem his stock.

*Christian Subtexts: Agrippina and Roland*

The novel opens with several allusions to demonic possession. There are the reiterated curses of the manic *zia* Mariangela: 'Cento mila diavoli al palazzo dei Roccaverdina!' (p. 38). Arguing with his feudatories, the *marchese* shrieks like an 'ossesso' (p. 46). The gales which constantly pounds the *palazzo* Roccaverdina is not solely a melodramatic sound-effect. In Sicilian tradition, wind is a demonic manifestation.[49] Ràbbato, we are repeatedly told, is uniquely exposed to the four winds. It is within this context of implied demonic possession that we must place the first appearance of Agrippina Solmo (Chapter 2).

Croceian critics rightly remark upon Agrippina's curiously immaterial presence, likening her entrances to apparitions. Thus, here, the *marchese* becomes aware in mid-argument of 'qualche cosa di nero fermatosi silenziosamente in mezzo all'uscio' (p. 43). Agrippina's approach has similarly eluded his interlocutors. She then silently disappears 'come se avesse avuto le suole delle scarpe foderate di ovatta' (p. 45). Her enigmatic presence is marked by its extreme fixity. She stands 'nera e immobile come una statua su la soglia dell'uscio' (p. 44). Agrippina's statuesque, iconic quality is underlined throughout the novel. It is a hint that she is to be placed within a hagiographical subtext.

Capuana's *paesane* reveal a lively interest in Sicilian popular hagiography. We encounter allusions to the cults of St Bernard ('Don Peppantonio'), St Francis of Assisi ('Fra Formica'), St Francis of Paola ('La casa nuova'), St Francis Xavier ('Il mago'), St John ('Comparatico'), St Joseph ('Lo sciancato', 'Rottura col patriarca'), St Liborius ('Lotta sismica'), and St Sebastian (*Malìa*). Some *novelle*

burlesque hagiographical episodes. 'La conversione di don Ilario', for example, parodies the temptation of St Antony, and 'Notte di san Silvestro' comically reworks an episode in the life of Sylvester.[50]

The saint whose cult is most frequently evoked, however, is Agrippina, patron of Capuana's home town Mineo, which, in his later fiction, he frequently portrays under the guise of Ràbbato.[51] Capuana's protagonists celebrate her as protectress of the people, guardian of persecuted youth, and expeller of demons.

The most detailed allusions to St Agrippina occur in 'Zi' Gamella' and 'Le verginelle' (both 1895). In the former, set in pre-*Risorgimento* Mineo, she figures as popular heroine. The peasant protagonist addresses naive patriotic odes to the saint, in which she is portrayed routing the Saracens/Bourbons.[52] In 'Le verginelle', she is champion of youth, invoked to persuade a despotic father to accept his daughter's suitor. The heroine participates in the annual procession of village maidens to the cave of Làmia (on the outskirts of Mineo) from which Agrippina reputedly expelled demons. With the complicity of the guardian, she meets her lover in a hidden grotto. The resulting pregnancy, which forces her father's hand, is ironically termed a 'miracle' of the saint.[53]

Agrippina plays a similar role in the earlier 'Don Peppantonio' (1883) where the bilious protagonist again opposes his adopted daughter's marriage. The lovers elope shortly after he blasphemes against Agrippina.[54] In accordance with hagiographic tradition, the saint both protects the young and exorcizes *don* Peppantonio's demonic rage. She is, moreover, invoked as a talisman against evil spirits throughout Capuana *paesana* production.[55] His fiction, however, is not the sole evidence of Capuana's interest in St Agrippina. He was responsible, in June 1881, for a hoax seventeenth-century devotional poem on the martyrdom of St Agrippina.[56] Its appearance coincides with the first mentions of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* in Capuana's correspondence.[57]

There is much to suggest that Agrippina Solmo is modelled on her saintly namesake. She is popular champion, desecrated icon, and instrument of redemption for a demonically possessed protagonist. She first appears, as we have seen, as the *marchese* shrieks like an 'ossesso'. She is ushered in by the maidservant *mamma* Grazia, a transparent allegorical representation of grace. Agrippina's apparition is not ghostly, as Croceian critics suggest, but saintly.

Her hagiographical role is most clearly illustrated on her second appearance (Chapter 4). Here *mamma* Grazia permits her to enter the *marchese*'s chamber in order to foil a suicide attempt. Her mysteriously silent intervention is again implicitly likened to a saintly intercession. In counterbalance to the Classical subtexts of Oedipus and Paris, Agrippina points to the possibility of redemption. She seeks not to free Ràbbato of the demonic *marchese* but to liberate him from his own devils.

Within this Christian subtext, too, the *marchese* appears to repeat the sins of his feudal ancestors. Chapter 3, in particular, suggests that this is no isolated *caso di coscienza.* Here the *baronessa di Lagomorto* laments the degeneration of her stock and the agricultural ruin of her feuds. She remarks to *don* Silvio that 'il castigo di Dio' (p. 54) is upon the Roccaverdina. She is, however, comically incapable of perceiving the cause of divine wrath. As the interview proceeds, it becomes evident that the Roccaverdina are guilty of systematic sacrilege.

Upon entering her chamber, *don* Silvio first remarks a religious painting brought home from Rome by a seventeenth-century Roccaverdina. Disturbed by its irreverent setting, he regrets that he dare not suggest that the *baronessa* donate it to his church. Her ancestor's sacrilegious appropriation is underlined by the painting's subject: Peter's denial of Christ.[58] This sets the scene for the *baronessa*'s blasphemies.

Begging alms for Neli Casaccio's family, *don* Silvio begins, 'Mi manda Gesù Cristo' (p. 49). The *baronessa* replies, 'Gesù Cristo vi

manda da me troppo spesso!', adding that the Lord attends too conscientiously to the destitute and forgets that 'ricchi e poveri' (p. 50) alike require rain for their crops. She asks *Don* Silvio to convey her reply to his 'master': 'Diteglielo, diteglielo a Gesù Cristo. Ci vuole la pioggia, Signore!' He reminds her in vain that her charity will be rewarded in the next life. God, she replies, owes her a favour in this, having permitted Agrippina Solmo to tempt her nephew. As *don* Silvio urges resignation to God's will, she snaps, 'La volontà di Dio qui non c'entra per niente' (p. 50). God cannot admit such 'enormità' as this mismatch. The *baronessa* refutes *don* Silvio's suggestion that all are equal before the Lord. If Christ had been an egalitarian, he would not have chosen a mother of royal blood. In a crudely satirical passage, then, the *baronessa* appropriates the deity for feudal ends, reducing his images to household furnishings.

It is against this sacrilegious backdrop that we must place Agrippina Solmo's third appearance. Parallels are implied between the *baronessa*'s blasphemy, her ancestor's sacrilegious acquisition of the religious painting, and her nephew's profanation of this iconic figure. The *baronessa* has summoned Agrippina in order to commit a further blasphemy. She accuses her of arranging Rocco Criscione's death in order to reconquer the *marchese*. The outraged Agrippina invokes divine retribution: 'Fulmini del cielo, Signore! Fuoco in questa e nell'altra vita a chi mi vuol male!' (p. 52). In her capacity as popular champion, Agrippina's maledictions have genuine authority. The decline of feudalism is thus reinterpreted from a Christian perspective. The nobility abdicates its role as protector of the peasantry and cynically enlists religion to its cause.

The brief family history in Chapter 5 presents further instances of sacrilege and divine vengeance. The *marchese*'s forebears are famed for their mistreatment of a succession of 'sante donne' brought into the household by marriage. Recalling the 'scapataggini' of their husbands, the *baronessa* will later describe both her mother and sister-in-law as 'santa e martire' (p. 230). The hagiographical subtext that we have traced implies that the

*marchese* repeats his ancestors' sins. Having abused the saintly Agrippina, he tempts Zòsima to quit a monastic existence. She and her sisters are, for the *baronessa*, 'monache' (p. 122) and 'angeliche creature'. Zòsima's physiognomy and old-fashioned dress resemble the Roccaverdina females portrayed on the *baronessa*'s walls. Named, like Agrippina after a virgin martyr, she appears designated as the next victim of Roccaverdina manhood.[59]

One might detect a similar hagiographical/Christian subtext in other episodes in these opening chapters. Perhaps, with the death of Rocco Criscione, Ràbbato is deprived of the protection of St Rock, who is invoked in vain against the diseases which decimate Ràbbato's livestock. As patron saint of prisoners, he may turn to protect Neli Casaccio.

Neli's forename too may contain a religious allusion. His family consider him 'innocente come Gesù Cristo' (p. 71). Emanuele, of course, means 'son of god'. His wrongful imprisonment thus appears a further sacrilegious appropriation on the Roccaverdina's part. It is surely significant too that the one man who questions Neli's guilt is nicknamed 'san Spiridione'. This apocryphal saint is associated in Sicily with the uncovering of concealed objects.[60] Finally, we must note that the peasant whom the *marchese* bullies into selling Margitello (the scene of Rocco's murder) is named *Santi* Dimauro.

With Agrippina, Zòsima, Rocco, Neli, and Santi, the *marchese* continues a family tradition of persecuting the saintly. Yet we have seen that Agrippina intercedes to save his soul. The Paris subtext also implies that he has a heavenly protectress. What, then, stays divine punishment?

It is surely the conflict between historical forces that we have perceived in the *marchese*. His ambiguous treatment of Agrippina and Rocco, half-serfs, half-partners, implies a desire to abandon atavistic abuses. His profound sense of the feudal bond might combine with his enlightened approach to agriculture to produce

a progressive paternalism. The *marchese*'s contradictions are potentially fruitful. He neglects, however, the gifts which might regenerate his stock.

The first section of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* culminates in the *marchese*'s failure to seize a chance of redemption. Saved from suicide by Agrippina, he experiences a moment of religious dread. Stored in his cellar, he discovers a carving of Christ on the Cross (a transparent cipher for his troublesome conscience). This, then, is another appropriated and discarded icon. The *marchese* recalls that it had terrified him as a child. In vain, his grandfather had assured him that 'quello era Gesù Crocefisso, e che non ne doveva aver paura' (p. 91). It had finally been hidden to appease him.

Despite his own desecrations, the *marchese* cannot fully reproduce the sacrilegious calm of his forebears. Healthy fear of Christ points to the possibility of redemption. To his horror, the carved Christ has now become visible through a worm-eaten shroud. The resurgent Christ in the cellar is a transparent cipher for the *marchese*'s reawakened faith. It is this symbolic resurrection which drives him to confess his guilt to *don* Silvio.

The confession takes place against a backdrop of raging winds. Again, within the Christian subtext this is not merely a melodramatic convention. The four winds which buffet *don* Silvio's humble dwelling are clearly characterized as demonic manifestations. Insistently personified ('soffiavano, fischiavano, stridevano, urlavano' (p. 93)), they appear to the priest 'un nemico assediante' (p. 93), an 'inferno scatenato' (p. 95). 'Indispettiti' (p. 94) by his prayers, they redouble their assault. As the *marchese* confesses to Rocco Criscione's murder, they vie with *don* Silvio for possession of his soul.

Yet some critics have proposed a naturalist reading of this scene. For Davies, it is not remorse which motivates the confession but a superstitious fear of Hell.[61] The *marchese* shows no authentic repentance, believing that Rocco merited punishment for defying his feudal lord. This is to overlook, however, the *marchese*'s

astonishment that, come to 'accusarsi' (p. 98), he seeks to justify himself. We witness a struggle between atavistic pride and a reawakened faith which he experiences 'con la stessa semplicità, con la stessa sincerità di quand'era fanciullo'.

Certainly, the former proves more powerful. *Don* Silvio insists that redemption lies in a public assumption of guilt but the *marchese* dares not blemish his name. Yet the *marchese* acknowledges an ideological conflict between the 'leggi umane e divine' (p. 99) and feudal prejudice. If we note his lucidity and sincere if timid faith, we must be wary of concluding that the road to redemption is deterministically barred.

A literary allusion further suggests that the *marchese* is not irrevocably damned. Recalling his murderous rage, he remarks: 'Il Signore ci toglie il senno in certe circostanze.' (p. 97). *Don* Silvio retorts: 'Quando meritiamo tale castigo!' We have noted that Aquilante's name alludes to the role of the eagle in Sicilian folk tradition. It also, of course, recalls the *Orlando furioso* (where, significantly, the spiritualist's namesake appears primarily in episodes featuring necromancy).[62] Perhaps, in both Roland and the *marchese*, heaven punishes its favourite. It is the sin of a potential defender of the faith, blessed with exceptional 'ardire', which incurs the greatest wrath. There is a suggestion that the *marchese*, potential regenerator of his stock, suffers from a redemptive madness designed to alert him to the squandering of his gifts.

Our study of Chapters 1-9 shows a society in transition between the feudal and the bourgeois. This process of historical transformation is subjected to rival mythological interpretations, pre-Christian and Christian. In both, the feudal aristocracy is guilty of sacrilege. In the former, the *marchese* must repeat and expiate the sins of his ancestors. The latter, however, provides the possibility of breaking the cycle and redeeming the Roccaverdina stock in a spirit of progressive paternalism. The alternative possibilities of decadence and renewal are, of course, reflected in the *marchese*'s name, which juxtaposes sterility (Rocca) and

fertility (verdina). The section concludes with the *marchese*'s failure to accept his first chance of redemption.

The *marchese* is no brutal compound of instinct and atavistic prejudice. He lucidly perceives a crisis of values and, at times, takes an almost decadent pleasure in his own contradictions. The *mariage blanc* between Rocco and Agrippina is partly a compromise between prejudice and 'leggi umane', ensuring that the *marchese* does not disgrace his name by wedding his mistress. Yet the *marchese* acknowledges that 'l'ostacolo apparente metteva un sapore nuovo nella mia vita' (p. 100). Indeed, he adds, 'non godevo di altro!'. He derives pleasure from tormenting Agrippina and from the 'giuoco' of maintaining 'le apparenze'. He discovers, however, that he has underestimated the strength of 'legge umane'. Rocco and Agrippina yearn to consummate their union, and the 'giuoco' turns to homicidal passion. Viewed in this light, the *marchese* is no anachronistic naturalist hero. He resembles rather Bourget's experimenter *in anima vili* or D'Annunzio's sophist of pleasure. Capuana thus pre-empts the *superomismo* that represents the *marchese*'s final attempt to silence remorse.

b) *Chapters 10-17*

In the first section of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, we noted a tension between Classical and Christian subtexts. In the second, the latter predominate, repeatedly hinting that the *marchese* may achieve redemption.

*Master and Slave*

Despite *don* Silvio's refusal to grant absolution, the *marchese*'s 'coscienza' (p. 105) is momentarily appeased. He is convinced that his confession will have placated Heaven, and that a more sophisticated priest would have ordered private penance. He retrospectively attributes his crime to 'l'opera diabolica' (p. 106) of Agrippina. Now, however, her spell appears broken as, since the murder, he has felt only aversion to her.

This aversion is highly ambiguous. On one hand, it represents the end of a sacrilegious abuse and leads the *marchese* to perceive that he has squandered his gifts in fleshly indulgence, a conclusion born out by the allusions to the temptation of Paris and madness of Roland.[63] From this perspective, the murder of Rocco Criscione, which severs the *marchese*'s sexual bond with Agrippina and spurs him to explore neglected political and agricultural talents, appears a potential instrument of redemption. On the other hand, aversion implies a refusal of divine intercession. The *marchese* fails to recognize in Agrippina a saintly protector, considering even her foiling of his suicide attempt demonic interference. Redemption is at once pursued and spurned.

Anathematizing Agrippina as carnal temptress, the *marchese* reveals his thralldom to the dualistic Catholicism which represses Patrizio and Geltrude in *Profumo* and persists within Montani's decadentism in *La sfinge*. A master-slave relationship between spirit and flesh mirrors that between feudal lord and vassal. The *marchese*'s loathing of the flesh is, we have seen, intensified following the murder of Rocco. This suggests a Hegelian interpretation of the killing.

Rocco is the slavish other on which the *marchese*'s feudal self-consciousness depends. 'Otherness' is implied both in references to Rocco as 'un altro padrone' and in the echoes between his name and the *marchese*'s: Rocca/Rocco, verdina/Criscione (Sicilian 'crisciuri' = 'crescere'). The arranged *mariage blanc* between Rocco and Agrippina is an attempt, on the *marchese*'s part, to reduce his mistress to an equivalent 'otherness'. This, however, renders Rocco a potential sexual rival and a challenge to the *marchese*'s self-consciousness. The *marchese* thus eliminates him and deprives himself of the other on which his self-consciousness depends. The master-slave relationship is transferred to his own psyche. The murder, then, represents a step in the evolution of the *marchese*'s self-consciousness but leaves him with a divided self.

In Chapter 13, the *marchese* effectively banishes Agrippina by granting a shepherd from a neighbouring village permission to marry her. Agrippina clearly hopes that he will withhold consent and, pleading unsuccessfully for the resumption of their union, weds 'per disperazione' (p. 135). Where the *marchese* believes that he spurns temptation, he, in fact, exiles his protectress.[64]

*Literary Subtexts: Dostoevsky and Faust*

No longer 'troubled' by Agrippina, the *marchese* is free to court Zòsima. The courtship is doubly sacrilegious We have already noted hints that, in Zòsima, the *marchese* abuses another virgin martyr. He also, however, breaks faith with Agrippina. The *marchese* cannot forgive her for confessing that only murder prevented Rocco and her from breaking their oath of chastity. Yet, on his first night with Agrippina, he too had sworn eternal fidelity. The continued presence of *mamma* Grazia, who repeatedly calls the *marchese* 'figlio mio' (p. 131), nonetheless indicates that redemption remains a possibility.

We have noted a hagiographical subtext to Zòsima's name. It might also recall Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), whose conviction that salvation lies in the assumption of others' guilt is shared by *don* Silvio. In Chapters 10-17, the priest fasts to his death in penitence for the *marchese*'s crime. *Don* Silvio's insistence that the *marchese* make a public confession and embrace suffering also, of course, echoes *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Both parallels with Dostoevsky suggest that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is a drama of redemption.[65]

As *don* Silvio fasts and organizes penitential processions and prayers for rain, the *marchese*'s conscience is again troubled. He dares not now refute his feudatories' conviction that 'abbiamo la mano di Dio adosso' (p. 107). It is at this point that a major mythico-literary subtext is introduced. The *cavalier* Pergola, the *marchese*'s atheistic cousin, is an explicitly Mephistophelean figure.[66]

He appears just as the protagonist yearns to abandon guilty seclusion. He flatters the marchese's feudal pride ('Se fossi nei vostri panni, non si dovrebbe muovere foglia in paese senza il mio consenso' ( p. 115)). He mocks the religious and social prejudices which had prevented marriage with Agrippina and excuses the *marchese*'s sensuality in the manner of a stage demon ('Io sono indulgente. Capisco le debolezze umane'). He lends the *marchese* prohibited books which shatter his renascent faith and holds out the possibility of an earthly paradise. The *marchese* rapidly comes to see him as 'quel demonio tentatore' (p. 114).

There are further hints of Pergola's Mephistophelean role in the epithets which the *marchese* most frequently uses to describe him: 'il cavaliere' and 'il cugino'. In the *Hexenküche* section of Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1, Mephistopheles chides the witches with the words 'Ich bin ein Kavalier, wie andre Kavaliere'.[67] The devil, meanwhile, is traditionally styled 'lu cucinu' in Sicily.[68]

Pergola flatters the *marchese*'s agricultural ambitions and proposes that they form a *Società Agricola* and co-operate on extensive land reform. In their plans to entrench and cultivate what is effectively a desert, they recall Faust's programme of land reclamation. Only Santi Dimauro stands in their way. His freehold of Margitello forms the 'punto centrale' (p. 109) of their project. Bullied into selling up, he regularly returns to haunt his lands and is finally driven to suicide. Sacrificed to the *marchese*'s Faustian scheme, he recalls Goethe's Philemon and Baucis who, holding land coveted by Faust, are murdered by his diabolic accomplices.

Pacifying his conscience through clandestine support of Neli Casaccio's family, the *marchese* exchanges his solitude for a 'vita nuova' (p. 122). Encouraged by Pergola, he seeks to 'mescolarsi con gli altri', 'agire insieme con gli altri'. His life to date has been 'un grande sbaglio' (p. 124), the work of 'un bruto'. This realization is, of course, potentially healthy. He correctly recognizes that he has wasted political and agricultural gifts and neglected his feudal duty. It is again hinted that Rocco's murder may paradoxically have opened the path to redemption. Pergola,

however, subverts the *marchese*'s spiritual renewal, deflecting him from the prerequisite for any 'vita nuova': a public and Christian assumption of guilt.

The parallel between the *marchese* and Faust suggests, however, that demonic activity may be divinely sanctioned and that Heaven may be testing its favourite. Faust, like Roland, is a potential champion of the faith. We may draw a further analogy between Agrippina and Gretchen. Abducted and forced into crime, each tirelessly intercedes on her tormentor's behalf.

Yet Agrippina may also be the equally ravished Helen. We have seen, after all, that the *marchese* is likened to Paris. One might argue that, like the *marchese*, Agrippina has two mythical aspects, pre-Christian and Christian. As Helen, she is innocent temptress and ruin of the Roccaverdina dynasty. As St Agrippina, she is potential redeemer. Spurning redemption, the *marchese* sees only the former.

*The 'Marchese' and St Antony*

Even now, however, Pergola's influence is not unchallenged. The *marchese* detects further evidence of divine wrath in the cattle disease and typhoid epidemic that accompany the drought. His starving feudatories stare accusingly through the windows of the *Casino dei nobili*, again suggesting that he repeats the atavistic crimes of his caste.

He is most consistently disturbed, however, by the Christ in his cellar. He decides to dispose of it by donating it to the convent of St Antony. Like the banishment of Agrippina, this is an ambiguous gesture. On one hand, he seeks to distance a troublesome spur to his conscience. On the other, it is an act of reparation, the return of an appropriated image of the deity. Despite Agrippina's absence, redemption remains a possibility.

The donation to the convent of St Antony is locally perceived as an affront to *don* Silvio's parish of St Isidore.[69] The *marchese*'s

choice, however, is not merely a calculated snub. Only twice in the novel is he called by his personal name: Antonio Schiraldi. Antony, then, is his name saint. A close relationship is further implied when the saint appears in a dream to Anastasio, the convent-guardian, and commands a penitential procession (p. 142).[70]

We are thus directed to parallels between the *marchese*'s experience and the temptations of St Antony. Both are peculiarly vulnerable to wrath, concupiscence, and excessive attachment to caste and land. Like St Antony, the *marchese* believes that he is tormented by the devil in womanly form. We might note too the prevalence of allegorical personifications of Gluttony ('Gola') in Antony's iconography. Capuana loses few opportunities to underline Pergola's punning surname ('per gola'). If the *marchese* succumbs to the materialist Pergola ('quel demonio tentatore'), he resists a relapse into luxury. He errs, however, in perceiving Agrippina exclusively as carnal temptress.

We perceive here a thematic continuity with the religious discourse of *Profumo*. Discussing the Faustian subtext, we noted a conflict between Agrippina's pre-Christian and Christian aspects. Allusions to the legend of St Antony suggest a further conflict between an ascetic Christian and a popular Christian aspect. In the former, she remains, as in the myth of Helen, an instrument of ruin. As Gretchen or the St Agrippina of Sicilian tradition, however, she is divine intercessor.

If the *marchese*'s self-identification with St Antony again points to the possibility of redemption, it also shows that he remains hampered by his failure to recognize the divine in Agrippina. An ascetic, dualistic Christianity leads him to identify her with the flesh. Yet there may be something of Flaubert's Antony in the *marchese*, as he strains against restrictive ideological structures. We might draw together allusions to Faust and Antony to construct a picture of a potentially heroic figure struggling to free his consciousness of atavistic prejudice and asceticism.

The donation again temporarily eases the *marchese*'s conscience. Yet doubt is rapidly cast upon this act of reparation by revelations of the scandalous life led by the monks of San Antonio (a comment on the hypocrisies of asceticism). The *marchese* is soon implicated in a further blasphemous episode. He plays Tarot with the guardian of the monastery of Santa Colomba while, in moments of exasperation, another card-partner spits upon a image of 'Cristo alla Colonna' concealed within his hat. This mocking of Christ pre-empts the sacrificial deaths of *don* Silvio and Neli Casaccio.[71]

In Chapter 16, the *marchese* is visited by the moribund *don* Silvio who, praising the potentially redemptive donation of the crucifix ('il bell'atto che toglieva quella sacra immagine da un posto non degno' (p. 153)), discreetly urges him to repent and to trust in the 'misericordia di Dio' (p. 154). This is the *marchese*'s last opportunity to prevent *don* Silvio assuming his sins and suffering in his stead. He yearns, however, for the priest to take his secret to the grave.

*Don* Silvio's death is explicitly represented as a martyrdom. The populace mourn the passing of 'un santo' (p. 155), seizing pieces of his clothing as 'reliquie' (p. 156). The *marchese*, then, again follows the Roccaverdina tradition of persecuting saints. He clearly perceives his moral responsibility for *don* Silvio's death, seeing a direct rebuke in his (innocent) dying words 'ringraziate il Marchese' (p. 156) and feeling, at his funeral, 'forte, vittorioso, quasi la fine di quell'uomo fosse stata opera sua' (p. 158).

Yet not even now is the *marchese* definitively damned. *Don* Silvio dies at 9 p.m. on a Friday, the hour of Christ's death. Through the assumption of the *marchese*'s sins, he intercedes to obtain his tormentor's salvation. *Don* Silvio's death is shortly followed by the end of the drought, of the 'castigo di Dio'. This is interpreted by the villagers as a 'grazia' (p. 180) obtained by St Isidore to whom, as we have seen, *don* Silvio's parish is devoted. The priest, then,

sacrifices himself in the *marchese*'s stead, preserving the possibility of redemption for both Ràbbato and its master.

*Don* Silvio's death is mirrored, in Chapter 17, by that of Neli Casaccio. Again the *marchese* forgoes a last-minute opportunity to prevent the innocent from suffering in his place. Aquilante, increasingly sceptical of Neli's guilt, invites the *marchese* to participate in a mediumistic interrogation of Rocco Criscione. The *marchese* refuses, and, shortly afterwards, Neli dies in prison. Yet, if we recall earlier references to Neli (Emmanuel) being 'innocente come Cristo', he too may die to secure the *marchese*'s redemption.

Here the Christian subtext is consistent with the Hegelian evolution of self-consciousness that we noted earlier. We have suggested that Rocco is an 'other' on whom the *marchese*'s feudal self-consciousness depends. To a lesser degree, the same is true of Neli. Just as Rocco marries in the *marchese*'s place, Neli is imprisoned and dies in his stead. Both might be termed 'un altro padrone'. Neli's death further exiles the *marchese* within his individual conscience and leads him to examine his ideological conditioning.

The novel's second section concludes with a third failure to seize an opportunity for reparation. The *marchese* is urged to set an example by settling a debt with the *comune* over his lands of Margitello (scene of Rocco Criscione's death). He and his fellow nobles have withheld sums owed since the abolition of 'diritti promiscui'. He is again, then, identified as potential redeemer of his class, capable of transcending feudal quietism and ending an abuse. He refuses, however, and turns his energies to the *Società Agricola*.

As he bewitches his associates with images of 'immense ricchezze' evoked 'con un colpo di bacchetta fatata' (p. 165), we recall Faust's promises to draw treasures from the Emperor's neglected lands. It is thus hinted that the society's illusory success derives from a Faustian pact. (It is constituted at the moment that Neli's death is announced.) A pointed contrast is made with the

real 'tesori' (p. 164) which the nobles withhold from the *comune*. This section ends then with a reminder that the *marchese* perpetuates the abuses of his class.

In Chapters 10-17, the *marchese* appears simultaneously to pursue and to spurn redemption. In exiling Agrippina, he both ends an abuse and banishes a protectress. In donating the crucifix, he both returns an appropriated object and seeks to silence his conscience. He permits the deaths of *don* Silvio and Neli Casaccio, but they may die to redeem him. The Mephistophelean Pergola arrests his religious reawakening, but may be sent to test Heaven's favourite. Self-identification with St Antony shows the *marchese* struggling to overcome lust and materialism, but asceticism leads him to mistake Agrippina for a carnal temptress.

In Chapters 18-26, these same subtexts chart the gradual erosion of the *marchese*'s means of reparation. Allusions to classical tragedy and to pre-Christian mythology, largely absent from Chapters 10-17, further suggest that his fate is determined.

c) *Chapters 18-26*

*Faust and Positivism*

The novel's third section presents further evidence that the *marchese* has entered into a Faustian pact. The new farm built at Margitello by the *Società Agricola* appears 'sorto da sottoterra per incanto' (p. 188). Its rapid construction is attributed to the 'portenti' of the *marchese* who mesmerizes his colleagues with images of miraculous wine-harvests. The inauguration of its wine-making plant again suggests unholy assistance. One barrel is christened after the apocryphal saint Giurranni, 'patrono del vino' (p. 203).

The *marchese*'s notary relates the saint's legend. Murdered and concealed beneath a wine-barrel, Giurranni ensures that it remains miraculously full until his mother discovers the body.

Should the *marchese* desire a similar wonder, the notary concludes, 'bisogna ammazzare qualche santo [...] e seppellirlo qui'. The *marchese* thinks immediately of Rocco, killed at Margitello, again suggesting analogies between Rocco and St Rock. His bailiff, however, jokingly likens the wine-plant to 'una chiesa da farvi le sacre funzioni' and anticipates 'la messa cantata' when the largest barrel, 'l'altare maggiore', will be full of the 'vero sangue di Cristo'. We are surely, then, directed to link the coming harvest with the Christ-like deaths of *don* Silvio and Neli Casaccio.[72] The *marchese*'s lands are fertilized by the blood of martyrs. The miraculous grape-crop is an invitation to uncover his sins.

Pergola's influence now reaches its apotheosis. The *marchese* glimpses in his positivism a chance to escape the dualistic Christianity which divides his consciousness following the killing of Rocco. Imbibed with Pergola's teachings, he disparages Aquilante's spiritualism and the dogmatic Catholicism of his uncle Tindaro. Pergola increasingly stands revealed as the successor to Ruggiero in *Profumo* and Butironi in *La sfinge*: a cipher for the negating spirit of a materialistic positivism. He indicates, then, that *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is not solely a critique of feudalism. As Pergola lures the *marchese* from medieval Christianity to materialism, parallels are implied with the anti-clerical zeal of the post-*Risorgimento* state.

The *marchese*'s attempts to repress his resurgent faith are juxtaposed with a discussion of the state abolition of monasteries. In Chapter 21, the municipal elections are held on a Sunday and a church commandeered as a voting-post. We are reminded of the state usurpation of spiritual prerogatives portrayed in *Profumo* where a monastery becomes a tax-office. Capuana does not exclusively dissect feudal ideology but highlights the *contemporary* danger of exchanging ascetic Catholicism for arid positivism.

Pergola's triumph is short-lived. The *marchese* is disabused when illness drives his cousin to a death-bed conversion. Pergola's illness, a swollen throat, is a transparent cipher for his inflated

greed. An image of St Blaise, 'protettore contro il mal di gola' (p. 209), is placed by his bed-side. Capuana signals that the self-styled rationalist and atheist is motivated solely 'per gola'. His conversion is typically self-interested. It is vital to note, however, that his life is spared, a reminder that it is never too late to repent.

Seeking reassurance, the *marchese* re-reads Pergola's positivist tracts and finds their reasoning specious. He perceives that he has abandoned a faith which denies the flesh for an ideology which denies the spirit. Like Pergola, he has lapsed through self-interest and cannot still 'l'intima voce' (p. 217) of conscience. He concludes that 'bisognava espiare' (p. 216) not only the deaths of Rocco Criscione, *don* Silvio, and Neli Casaccio but his cruelty to Zòsima and Agrippina. All are 'vittime sacrificate alla sua gelosia, al suo orgoglio, alla sua impenitenza' (p. 217). He laments that patrician pride has caused him to neglect opportunities for expiation. Unless he imposes a penance upon himself, he must await an inevitable 'castigo'. Yet he cannot identify a means of expiation open to him.

One surely cannot reconcile this passage with an exclusively naturalist reading of the novel. The *marchese* again views feudal ideology from a critical distance. He perceives a conflict between atavistic values and the dictates of conscience, and fully assumes responsibility for his failure to follow a clearly demarcated path of reparation. *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is, like *Profumo* a *Bildungsroman*. A murder occasioned naturalistically by psychopathological passion and atavistic prejudice provides its perpetrator with the opportunity to transcend psychological determinism and to free his consciousness.

*The 'Marchese' and 'Superomismo'*

Having perceived the necessity of active atonement, the *marchese*, however, seeks to evade his self-judgment and to reintegrate his self through exalted atavistic pride. Revelling in the Roccaverdina's nickname, the 'Maluomini', he strives to see

himself as the scorner of laws made by and for the weak. Now that unchecked despotism is no longer possible, 'la razza si adattava ai tempi' (p. 172). The *Società Agricola* is 'un atto di potenza e di forza' worthy of his ancestors. In a post-feudal age, 'non era possibile mostrarsi *Maluomini* altrimenti'.

His words recall the desire of both Corrado Uzeda in *I viceré* and Claudio Cantelmo in *Le vergini delle rocce* to reassert ancestral authority.[73] Yet Capuana shares neither De Roberto's fear of nor D'Annunzio's faith in the continued domination of an adaptable nobility. The *marchese*'s troublesome conscience and his attempts to tally religious, feudal, and 'human' law suggest that his access of *superomismo* is self-delusion.

Renewed patrician confidence permits him to mock Pergola who, now that 'la gola gli è scoppiata' (p. 220), laughs off his conversion. Their exchange, however, contains a warning that the *marchese*'s pursuit of feudal self-interest is doomed to failure. He surprises Pergola as he tells his children the fable of an 'orco', who, prior to eating a 'fanciulla' (p. 225), first gobbles up her companion, a goat. He chokes to death, however, on a bone which sticks in his throat.

This is partly a comment on Pergola's over-hasty attempts to dispose of the tenets which hindered indulgence of his 'gola'. Yet, bearing in mind those subtexts which present the protagonist as profaner of a divine heroine, the 'orco' is also a cipher for the *marchese*. Having consumed Agrippina's mate, he chokes on his religious conscience. Feudal *superomismo* is a superficial attempt to dispatch a troublesome faith.

The *marchese*'s successful candidature for the municipal elections is his first attempt to restore ancestral *dominio* and to re-immerse himself in the ritualized public role from which the murder of Rocco Criscione has exiled him. It is also a reminder of the neglected political gifts of one above party rivalry. Yet he is drawn into an uncompromising battle, losing a reputation for probity through intimidation worthy of the 'Maluomini'. An effort

to escape interiority merely leads to the conclusion that public and private are irreconcilable. The world is 'tutto apparenza' (p. 199). The respectable voters who had judged him honest may have committed sins greater than his own.

Again, the murder of Rocco Criscione provides an opportunity for spiritual development and heightened self-consciousness. Shaken from feudal quietude, the *marchese* not only perceives that he cannot re-embrace an ancestral public role but that a post-feudal age has divorced private citizen from public ritual and freed the individual conscience. He derives, however, from this potentially fruitful revelation merely a conviction that public endeavour is futile.

Marriage to Zòsima is a further doomed attempt to escape interiority. His bride senses that the *marchese* seeks only an impossible renewal. She thus suggests that they cancel their engagement. Refusal to break a promise is not honour but 'vanità' (p. 192); the situation is still 'rimediabile'. This is the first direct indication that Zòsima is not the submissive noblewoman 'alla vecchia' for which both *marchese* and *baronessa* take her. Similarly, her reluctance to accept financial aid from the *marchese* during their engagement stems not from atavistic pride but from a lucid renunciation of feudal privilege. Perceiving her family's decline, she humbly accepts a reduced condition.

The *marchese* nonetheless insists on taking her mother and sister into his household. Zòsima worries that they will be accused of calculation. The *marchese* retorts: 'Io non mi sono mai occupato dell'opinione degli altri. Non mi chiamo Antonio Schiraldi marchese di Roccaverdina per nulla!' (p. 192). This, significantly, is the first use of his personal name. What is intended as an assertion of caste pride betrays the *marchese*'s growing perception of a dichotomy between the public and private. The juxtaposition of personal name and hereditary title reveals his struggle to immerse himself fully in an ancestral public role. Zòsima proves no ally; her substitution of bourgeois privacy for

feudal pomp highlights the vanity of the *marchese*'s public 'vita nuova'.

The *marchese* again fails to to act upon a remediable situation, celebrating a marriage signposted as a further profanation. Zòsima rapidly perceives that she is merely an accessory to his 'vita nuova', on a par with his state-of-the-art wine-making equipment. She is further troubled by Agrippina's ghostly presence in the house that she once governed. Foreseeing rebellion, the *marchese* charts the failure of a 'compiuto rinnovellamento della sua vita' (p. 236).

Chapters 25-26 echo those *appassionate* which depict a new life contaminated by a constantly re-evoked past. In her determination that the *marchese* forget 'quell'*altra*' (p. 230; p. 235), Zòsima merely invites comparisons which revive the *marchese*'s dormant passion for Agrippina. He soon regrets that he has linked Zòsima to his 'fatalità' (p. 238). The defeat of his feudal *superomismo* is complete when he again rues the 'vanità di casta' (p. 183) which led him to marry Agrippina to Rocco.

The *marchese*'s yearning for his divine protectress is timely. The decline of *mamma* Grazia, now 'una larva di donna' (p. 236), warns that he may soon be denied access to an intercessor. A biblical subtext further suggests that he is in danger of definitively foregoing redemption. He has a nightmare vision of his confession materializing upon the walls of *don* Silvio's chamber 'come le bibliche parole di fuoco nel convito di Balthassar' (p. 185). The allusion to Belshazaar is not casual. Like the *marchese*, like Paris and Oedipus, he profanes holy objects (by entertaining concubines with gold and silver vessels taken from the temple at Jerusalem). 'Lifted up against the Lord of heaven', Belshazaar is 'weighed in the balances', 'found wanting', and condemned to death.[74] His kingdom is lost and divided. It is thus hinted that the *marchese* and his stock may be irrevocably judged.

As Christian subtexts suggest that the *marchese* may soon be beyond redemption, allusions to an unredeemed classical world resurface. The *marchese*'s uncle, Tindaro, an amateur archaeologist, uncovers a vase portraying Sisyphus (pp. 169-70): a warning that death cannot be cheated indefinitely. We are further directed to the mythological allusion in Tindaro's name. A devout Catholic, he repeatedly characterizes his daughter's civil marriage to Pergola as an abduction. As he laments that '*quell'empio*' (p. 171) has reduced her to concubinage, we recall his namesake, (putative) father of Helen of Troy. Analogies implicitly drawn between Agrippina and Helen in earlier allusions to the legends of Faust and Paris are re-emphasized when Tindaro asks the *marchese* to imagine Agrippina in his daughter's place.

Yet Tindaro/Tindarus may not be a wronged innocent. Perhaps a parallel is intended between his opposition to his daughter's civil marriage and Tindarus's blasphemy against Aphrodite. This might point us towards a more indulgent interpretation of the *marchese*'s affinities with Paris. If, like Paris, he is guilty of forsaking duty and political gifts for luxury, he nonetheless champions 'leggi umane' over Tindaro's sexually repressive feudal Catholicism. His relationship with Agrippina is, we have seen, ambiguous. He both exercises *droit de seigneur* and installs her as mistress of his house. From the first perspective, Agrippina remains, as for Tindaro, instrument of the flesh. From the second, the *marchese* transcends medieval dualism and abandons the master/slave relationship between feudal lord and vassal and between spirit and flesh.

Despite the warnings contained in both Christian and pre-Christian subtexts, the *marchese* seeks, yet again, to evade his guilt. We have seen that he resembles D'Annunzio's Claudio Cantelmo in his exaltation of atavistic pride. He now further recalls Cantelmo as he communes with his native soil, deriving from his work at Margitello 'nuovi e freschi elementi di vigoria fisica e intellettuale' (p. 223) and an access of 'ribelle resistenza contro tutto quel che si opponeva alla sua tranquillità, alla sua felicità' (p. 222).[75] Here too, however, he proves powerless to

escape the promptings of conscience. The *marchese* increasingly appears not an anachronistic naturalist hero but, like Giorgio Montani, a polemical riposte to the decadent hero.

*Oedipus and Political Allegory*

The *marchese* seeks to escape memories of Agrippina through work at Margitello. Instead, it is precisely here that her image haunts him most persistently. He increasingly struggles to disassociate his twin passions for Agrippina and for his 'terra'. We have seen that allusions to the legend of St Agrippina imply that Agrippina Solmo is the tutelary spirit of Ràbbato. We are surely, then, directed to identify the abducted Agrippina with the land which the *marchese* has appropriated from the *comune*.

The *marchese*'s relationship with this land is nonetheless filial. He regains vigour through contact with his maternal earth. This invites a re-reading of earlier references to *Oedipus Rex*.. As a cipher for the land, Agrippina is the *marchese*'s mother. Can, however, the analogy with Oedipus be extended further? Is the *marchese* symbolically guilty of parricide?

References to the Roccaverdina's immediate political past suggest that this is the case. Although the *marchese* is apolitical, his grandfather was a *Carbonaro* and his father captain of the *Guardia nazionale* in 1848. The revelation that the Roccaverdina, for all their feudal despotism, participated enthusiastically in the *Risorgimento* demands a political interpretation of the enforced marriage between Rocco and Agrippina.

The gift of Agrippina in marriage with the proviso that the union remain unconsummated may be read as a cipher for the reluctance of the pro-*Risorgimento* nobility fully to surrender feudal prerogatives and to restore their land to the *comune*. The Roccaverdina's refusal to hand over Margitello undermines a political process which they initially champion. In this analysis, if Agrippina is the land, Rocco is the Sicilian people. The *marchese*, of course, is son of both. The novel would thus contain a

recognition that, in Sicily, the *Risorgimento* has been betrayed. This is something which both Croceians critics, for whom Capuana is apolitical, and Marxist critics, for whom Capuana staunchly defends the post-*Risorgimento* status quo, accuse Capuana of evading.[76]

Although conceived as an attempt to still his conscience, the *marchese*'s communion with the land is a potentially redemptive gesture through which he acknowledges his affinity with land and people. A feudal master/slave ideology has hitherto led him to objectivize both as alien to his consciousness. Even as both pre-Christian and biblical subtexts imply that retribution is imminent, the possibility of salvation remains open.

Our study of Chapters 18-26 of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* shows that it is not the anachronistic study of feudalism perceived by some recent commentators. If the critique of a Unitary state which substitutes materialistic positivism for dualistic Catholicism is familiar from *Profumo* and *La sfinge*, the acknowledgment that a pro-*Risorgimento* land-owning class has betrayed the people must be read as a response to the Sicily of the *Fasci*. The novel proves equally contemporary in its debunking of D'Annunzio's aristocratic *superomismo*. The final section of the novel looks cautiously forward to a new political settlement.

d) *Chapters 27-34*

*A Faustian Defeat*

Chapters 27-34 chart the wreck of the *marchese*'s agricultural ambitions and the end of his marriage. The catalyst for both is the suicide of Santi Dimauro. Determined to assure the integrity of his feuds, the *marchese* has bullied Santi into surrendering the strategic enclave of Margitello. In despair, Santi hangs himself at the very heart of his former land. The villagers speculate that Santi thus seeks to blight the *marchese*'s harvest. He is rumoured to have promised that the *marchese* would find a 'frutto nuovo'

(p. 259) on the almond-tree at Margitello, one which 'gli farà stranguglioni'.

The likening of Santi's body to a 'frutto nuovo' once more suggests a connection between the *marchese*'s harvest and the fertilizing bodies of martyrs. The prediction that he will choke on his victim, meanwhile, recalls Pergola's fable of the 'orco'; Santi's choice of death by self-suffocation is a comment on his persecutor's 'gola'. The villagers of Ràbbato are jolted into observing that the *marchese* has despoiled both Santi and the *comune*. We have already seen that a parallel is drawn between the unlawful tenure of Margitello and the desecration of Agrippina. As the villagers discuss Santi's suicide, a tale is told which again suggests that the *marchese* has plundered sacred objects.

They recollect the earlier suicide of 'il Rospo'. Imprisoned for stealing a relic from the church of St Isidore, he is freed by the revolutionaries in 1848. Returning home, he finds a sixteen-year-old girl whom his wife presents as a daughter conceived shortly before his imprisonment. Believing her to be the fruit of adultery, 'il Rospo' avenges himself by seducing the girl. His heart-broken wife falls ill and, on her death-bed, persuades him of the truth of her tale. 'Il Rospo' immediately hangs himself.

His punishment for sacrilege (committed against a saint dear to *don* Silvio) is a further warning to the *marchese*. Retribution by incest, moreover, must again recall Oedipus. One might also detect, in this tale, a further critique of the arrogance of the secular state. Condemned in days when 'non si scherzava, trattandosi di cose sacre' (p. 253), 'il Rospo' is released in a spirit of anticlericalism yet cannot evade divine justice.

Swayed by local opinion, Zòsima resolves to challenge the *marchese*'s will and to persuade him to return Margitello to Santi's family. This is her first overt rebellion against the self-denying role of 'santa e martire' imposed by family tradition and an ascetic Christianity. Rejecting her mother's pleas that she

shoulder her 'croce' (p. 249) and accomplish 'la volontà del Signore', she wishes to be certain that she has no influence upon her husband: 'Vo' metterlo a questa prova!' (p. 264). Croceian critics judge Zòsima's final desertion of the *marchese* to be inconsistent with a meek character.[77] It is pre-empted, however, by the fruitless confrontation over Margitello (which indeed confirms Zòsima's suspicions that the *marchese* is beyond her sway).

The death of the *baronessa di Lagomorto* provides further hints of Zòsima's lucid reluctance to conform to anachronistic feudal norms. Trying on an inherited eighteenth-century gown, she is embarrassed by her reflection 'quasi si fosse mascherata fuori stagione' (p. 269). The matriarch's death foretells, of course, the ruin of the House of Roccaverdina. Equally significant is the simultaneous demise of the tutelary figure of *mamma* Grazia. It is no coincidence that a triumphant Pergola now abandons all pretence and avows his Mephistophelean role.

Pergola dominates the wine-tasting ceremony at Margitello intended to seal the *marchese*'s triumph. He toasts Satan 'forza vindice | della ragione' (p. 272) and mockingly invokes 'in nome del Diavolo' (p. 275) the wandering spirits of Rocco Criscione and Santi Dimauro. The toasting resembles a black mass with a sacrilegious baptism of the enterprise and blasphemous hymns before the wine-barrels. Pergola's diabolical allusions are not lost on the *marchese* who, laying down all *superomismo*, now attributes his crimes to the insinuations of 'il Diavolo' (pp. 272-73). The harvest is prodigious but, as saint's blood, the wine proves undrinkable. The *Società Agricola* is ruined and the *marchese*'s 'vita nuova' destroyed.

*Ceres and Anubis*

At this point, two pre-Christian subtexts are introduced which again suggest that Margitello is fertilized by sacrilegiously spilt blood, and that retribution is imminent. Tindaro unearths statuettes of Ceres and Anubis. In the myth of Ceres, we once

more encounter abduction and a punitive drought visited upon Sicily for its failure to protect Proserpine. A parallel is implied between Proserpine and the exiled Agrippina who, as we have seen, is insistently identified with the land. The statuette, however, portrays Ceres bearing a sheaf of corn, foretelling the return of Proserpine, the corn-spirit, and the restoration of divine order. Its discovery thus pre-empts the return of Ràbbato's tutelary spirit.

The statuette of Anubis, weigher of souls, may simply announce the day of judgment. Placed next to Ceres, however, we might recall how he helps Isis in her search for the body of the murdered Osiris. The myth is again, of course, an allegory of spring in which the resurrection of Osiris, symbol of fertility, ends a punitive drought. It presages the resurrection of buried martyrs (Rocco, Neli, Santi, *don* Silvio) and their reunification with the land-spirit Agrippina.[78] More prosaically, it foreshadows the imminent exposure of Rocco's murderer.

Tindaro's archaeological discoveries recall D'Annunzio's *La città morta* (1898). In both, the excavation of mythical objects is a metaphor for the resuscitation of mythical archetypes. We have suggested that the failure of the *marchese*'s 'vita nuova' may be read as a critique of D'Annunzian *superomismo*. Does Capuana, however, imitate D'Annunzio *in extremis* by dooming the *marchese* to repeat a mythical cycle and surrender to an implacable *fato*?

Allusions to allegories of spring certainly imply that, while Ràbbato may yet flourish, the *marchese* is a figure of sterility. Anubis reappears in 'l'abbaio di un cane' (p. 293) which immediately precedes the *marchese*'s descent into madness. Strapped to a chair and emitting canine yelps, the delirious *marchese* again evokes Anubis in his role of weigher of souls. The novel's conclusion, however, relates the breaking of mythical cycles through Christian redemption. Again, Capuana polemizes against a D'Annunzian model.

The immediate catalyst for the *marchese*'s mental collapse is an intervention by the exiled Agrippina. She sends a gift of *cacicavallo* which reawakens Zòsima's 'gelosia del passato' (p. 286). The resulting confrontation signals the end of their marriage and, in conjunction with the failed harvest, convinces the *marchese* of the failure of his 'vita nuova'. Rapidly surrendering to insanity, he makes for Margitello and publicly re-enacts the murder of Rocco. Yet Agrippina is not solely agent of divine retribution. The re-enactment may be read as the act of public contrition demanded by *don* Silvio.

*Faust vs Oedipus*

This reading is reinforced by the re-emergence of the Faustian subtext. When the delirious *marchese* is brought back to the *palazzo* Roccaverdina, Pergola arrives to watch over his victim. He is defeated, however, by the unexpected apparition of Agrippina and departs ignominiously as she forces her way past ('Me lo lascino vedere... Per carità, cavaliere!' (p. 301)). Like Gretchen, she intercedes to cheat the Mephistophelean Pergola of his prize.

The simultaneous flight of Zòsima equally points to a redemptive resolution. Shortly before his collapse, the *marchese* lists her amongst the 'saints' whom he has tormented. He despairs lest 'quella povera creatura innocente' (p. 278) pay for his sins. His public expiation, however, liberates Zòsima. By re-enacting the murder, he confesses his abiding passion for Agrippina. Dismissing her mother's pleas that she nurse 'un infelice, un malato' (p. 297), the disabused Zòsima finally rejects her ancestral role of 'santa e martire'. This is not the uncharacteristic rebellion of Croceian tradition but, as we have seen, the culmination of a growing discomfort with anachronistic feudal norms. She rejects atavistic duty for 'leggi umane', crying: 'In questo momento non posso ascoltar altro che il mio cuore.' (p. 299).

The novel's final chapter, however, suggests that if Capuana charts the collapse of feudalism, he nonetheless continues to champion economic paternalism. Here Agrippina selflessly nurses

the *marchese* through his fatal illness and submits uncomplainingly when expelled from the *palazzo* Roccaverdina upon his death. For Croceian critics, she is thus a poetic model of abnegation. For those commentators, conversely, who stress socio-economic factors, she stands revealed as the brutalized victim of feudalism who turns her oppressor into an idol. From this perspective, while the *marchese* displays ambivalence towards feudal norms in his monogamous relationship with a *paesana*, Agrippina's selfless devotion contains all that is most heroic and inhuman in a moribund culture. Attention to the novel's mythical subtexts reveals, however, that her final apparition heralds a new political settlement.

Agrippina's repeated cry of 'Figlio! Figlio mio!' (p. 307) upon the *marchese*'s death again recalls *Oedipus Rex*. We may note too the *marchese*'s final blindness and his uncle Tindaro's Creon-like assumption of power. We have suggested that Oedipal allusions identify the protagonist as son of the land (Agrippina) and the people (Rocco). In this analysis, he imposes a *mariage blanc* upon his parents while preserving an incestuous *droit de seigneur*.

The final chapter implies an extension of the political allegory. For the first time, Agrippina dares to assert that tragedy might have been avoided had her relationship with the *marchese* continued ('Ora non sarebbe in questo stato!' (p. 303)). Rocco's murder and the *marchese*'s madness are the fault of his family, 'della baronessa soprattutto' (p. 303).[79] It is not feudal loyalty which leads her to nurse him but 'gratitudine' for his love ('tutta l'anima sua grata e orgogliosa di essere stata amata fino a quel punto dal marchese di Roccaverdina' (p. 307)).

This would suggest that the *marchese*'s principal error is to arrange a match to which neither party aspires. Agrippina yearns for union with the *marchese*, consecrated or no, while Rocco is content to be his right-hand man. To impose a *mariage blanc* between land and people is, as a servant remarks, to put 'l'esca accanto al fuoco' (p. 306) and to promote class-conflict. Both demand to serve an enlightened paternalist. The last of the

Roccaverdina, laudably committed to agricultural reform but tragically incapable of transcending caste prejudice, misses the opportunity to redeem his class.

Humbly quitting the *palazzo* Roccaverdina, Agrippina awaits a new master. His identity may be suggested by 'Il benefattore', a lengthy *novella* published shortly before *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*. In this, an entrepreneur revitalizes a Sicilian village while denouncing the feudal neglect which has turned a granary into a desert. The *marchese* may, then, surrender land and people to a progressive, paternalistic bourgeoisie. Vitally, however, the entrepreneur of 'Il benefattore' is a foreigner, an unlikely 'inglese, di Dublino, in Scozia'.[80] Capuana retains a *risorgimentale* faith in 'English'-style paternalism, but appears sceptical of his compatriot's willingness or ability to implement it.

If, however, the *marchese* fails to redeem his class, Agrippina's Gretchen-like intercession implies that he achieves personal salvation. His crimes stem, as his mistress observes, from passion for Agrippina/the land and an effort to reconcile atavistic norms and 'legge umane'. It is his love and struggle which secure him divine protection and render him potential redeemer of his stock. The re-enactment of Rocco's murder is an acknowledgment *in extremis* of his origins in the land (Agrippina) and the people (Rocco). It is also a recognition of the carnality which an ascetic Catholicism leads him to divorce from his spirit and to objectivize in Agrippina. He is driven insane, then, in pursuit of a new synthesis of, on one hand, master and land, and, on the other, spirit and flesh. The effort nonetheless redeems him.

* * * *

We noted earlier that critical responses to *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* have been highly polarized. Where some commentators see a neo-idealist renunciation of naturalism, others perceive a rigorous but anachronistic analysis of race, milieu, and moment. In our study, we have partly followed Marchese and Davies in tracing the *marchese*'s behaviour to a

conflict between feudal ideology and bourgeois or liberal humanist values. His crimes thus emerge naturalistically from a society in transition. Examining, however, characters and episodes often dismissed as digressive or documentary, we have discovered a network of mythical, hagiographical, biblical, and literary subtexts which militate against an exclusively naturalist reading.

It could, of course, be claimed that the *marchese* senses the warnings implicit in some of the Christian subtexts. In a milieu of quasi-medieval superstition, these might be accounted cultural or environmental factors which play naturalistically upon his psyche. Clearly, however, allusions to Egyptian and Hellenic mythology and to Sophocles, Ariosto, Goethe, and Flaubert are not apprehended on an intradiegetic level. These explicitly direct the reader towards an idealistic interpretation of Sicilian history. The decline of feudalism is traced to the nobility's abdication of its sacred role as protector of the people and to a sacrilegious appropriation of the land and objectification of the people.

Pre-Christian mythical subtexts imply that the *marchese* is doomed to repeat atavistic abuses. Allusions to *Faust*, to the *Orlando furioso*, and to the hagiography of St Agrippina suggest, conversely, that he misses the opportunity to redeem his stock. Unable fully to forego atavistic prejudice in favour of 'leggi umane', he can neither surrender power (by permitting Agrippina and Rocco to consummate their union) nor exchange despotism for enlightened paternalism (by marrying Agrippina and working alongside Rocco).

Read as political allegory, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* proves no 'frutto fuori stagione'. With its tracing of class-conflict to the failure of a pro-*Risorgimento* nobility to surrender feudal prerogatives, the novel is Capuana's comment on the Sicily of the *Fasci*. One might, of course, consider his faith in enlightened paternalism, his conviction that the peasantry do not aspire to ownership, and his ascription of social unrest to a degenerate aristocracy anachronistic in themselves. *Il marchese di*

*Roccaverdina*, nonetheless, answers those critics, who, both in Capuana's day and subsequently, accuse him of lacking interest in the 'questione sociale' and faith in historical processes.

*Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is equally a novel of its day in its anti-D'Annunzian polemic. Neither the exaltation of his stock nor communion with his native soil can still the promptings of the *marchese*'s conscience. Reactivated mythical archetypes give way to what is both a Christian exemplum of sin and redemption and the Hegelian freeing of a consciousness. In its debunking of *superomismo*, the novel intensifies *La sfinge*'s attack on decadentism and looks forward to the misguided imitation of Claudio Cantelmo portrayed in *Rassegnazione*.

It equally displays thematic continuity with Capuana's earlier novels in a continued attack on untrammeled positivism and ascetic Christianity. The impotently objective Follini of *Giacinta* evolves via *Profumo*'s sexually self-interested Ruggiero and *La sfinge*'s destructively analytical Butironi into the Mephistophelean Pergola. The *cavaliere*'s positivist rhetoric merely dignifies 'gola' and evaporates before the possibility of divine judgment. Yet Capuana warns too against religious idealism. The contrast between the *marchese*'s name-saint Antony and the folk-icon Agrippina echoes *Profumo*'s setting of sexually repressive medievalism against a popular and pantheistic Christianity. *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is thus not a tardy product of naturalism but a coherent contribution both to Capuana's ideological discourse and to the novel's immediate literary context.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1] Croce, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 114-15.

[2] Vetro, pp. 236-48. Although, as we shall see, most Croceian critics place greater stress on Agrippina's racial and class characteristics, Vetro's analysis has remained influential. It is echoed in the preface to the most recent edition of the novel,

where Gilberto Finzi once more locates in Agrippina Solmo a nucleus of 'poesia' and applauds an attempt to forego a naturalist analysis of hereditary taints. The *marchese*'s religious qualms are again, however, judged discursive and Aquilante's spiritualism an inessential scientific curiosity. (See Gilberto Finzi, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, introd. by Gilberto Finzi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), pp. 5-23).

[3] Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 15, and Attilio Momigliano, *Storia della letteratura italiana: dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, 8th edn (Milan: Principato, 1955), p. 556. Momigliano sees Capuana as a forerunner of the 'psicologia intricata ed ombrosa' of Borgese and Moravia. He is nonetheless hampered by 'un certo abito scientifico'.

[4] Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 2908-09, and Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., pp. 60-68. See also Gualtiero Amici, *Narratori italiani da Verga alla neo avanguardia* (Bologna: Ponte Nuovo, 1973), p. 17, and E. A. Walker, 'Structural Techniques in Luigi Capuana's Novels', *Italica*, 42 (1965), 265-75 (p. 272).

[5] Madrignani, p. 271.

[6] Ibid., p. 294.

[7] Ibid., p. 249.

[8] Madrignani is most closely echoed in Andrea Battistini and Ezio Raimondi, 'Retoriche e poetiche dominanti', in *Letteratura italiana,* ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Einaudi, 1982- ), IV (1984), 5-339 (p. 229), and Gisella Padovani, 'Capuana e il suo pubblico', *Critica letteraria*, 19 (1991), 133-43 (p. 143).

[9] Storti Abate, pp. 138-42.

[10] Ferdinando Giannessi, 'Luigi Capuana: *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', *Nuova antologia*, 481 (1961), 550-52 (p. 551).

[11] Scalia, pp. 229-32. Zangara follows Scalia and Giannessi in questioning the moral basis of the *marchese*'s anguish. His remorse is partly physiological and partly fear of feudal loss of face if he were to be unmasked. Similarly, Agrippina Solmo juxtaposes inhuman servility with authentic charity (Zangara, pp. 58-68).

[12] Cavalli Pasini, p. 119.

[13] Folco Portinari, 'Il verismo squagliato', in Folco Portinari, *Le parabole del reale: romanzi italiani dell'Ottocento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), pp. 217-24 (p. 222). Ghidetti follows Portinari in arguing that the *marchese* is resolved in terms of Lombrosian psychology, and that the demise of his caste is traced to genetic deterioration (Enrico Ghidetti, 'Su Capuana romanziere', *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 97.3 (September-December 1993), 35-51 (pp. 47-51).

[14] Federico De Roberto, '*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', *Il corriere della sera*, 8 June 1901 (partly repr. in Sarah Zappulla Muscarà, *Federico De Roberto critico e traduttore* (Catania: Giannotta, 1973), pp. 97-101).

[15] Enrico Panzacchi, '*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', *Nuova antologia*, 94 (1901), 82-88 (p. 88).

[16] Arturo Pompeati, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols (Turin: UTET, 1962), IV, 504-05.

[17] Marchese, p. 121.

[18] Ibid., p. 125.

[19] Ibid., p. 130.

[20] Marchese is partly followed by Villa who argues that, for the modern reader, Santi Dimauro's suicide is 'vibrante di risonanze umane e sociali' but that these are lost on the apolitical Capuana (Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 66).

[21] Geno Pampaloni, Introduction to Capuana, *Giacinta ed altri racconti*, pp. 5-21 (p. 20).

[22] Alfredo Stussi, 'Lingua e problema della lingua in Luigi Capuana', in *L'illusione della realtà*, pp. 11-41 (p. 17).

[23] Davies, pp. 132-34.

[24] Ibid., p. 133.

[25] Ibid., p. 129.

[26] Ibid., pp. 134-47.

[27] Ibid., pp. 135-36.

[28] Luigi Pirandello, '*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', in Sipala, pp. 93-97 (first publ. in *Natura e arte*, 1 July 1901).

[29] Ojetti, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., pp. 235-36.

[30] Pirandello, '*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', cit., p. 94.

[31] Ibid., pp. 95-96. Pirandello's formal analysis is echoed in Benjamin Crémieux, *Panorama de la littérature italienne contemporaine* (Paris: Kra, 1928), p. 78. Crémieux nonetheless judges the juxtaposition of 'des sujets véristes à fond mélodramatique' and 'des analyses psychologiques' incoherent.

[32] Giulio Ferroni, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), III, 412.

[33] Portinari, 'Il verismo squagliato', cit., p. 217.

[34] Few critics have taken up Gianni Oliva's suggestion that 'una vicenda che ha tutti i sintomi del dramma decadente' be studied within the context of the European *fin de siècle* (Gianni Oliva, *Capuana in archivio* (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 1979), p. 197). Apart from Gilardino, only Traversa detects feudal *superomismo* in the *marchese*, who can feel no remorse for murder committed in defence of family rights. His guilt stems, conversely, from his transgression of an ancestral law in becoming attached to a creature whom he is feudally bound to 'dominate' (Traversa, pp. 108-09).

[35] Sergio M. Gilardino, 'Capuana e Bourget, in *L'illusione della realtà*, pp. 135-84 (p. 167).

[36] Ibid., p. 165.

[37] Ibid., p. 170.

[38] Ibid., p. 166.

[39] Ibid., pp. 177-78.

[40] Ibid., p. 154.

[41] Luigi Capuana, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, introd. by Gilberto Finzi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), p. 43. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. (*Il Marchese di Roccaverdina* is first published in Milan by Treves in 1901).

[42] See Luigi Capuana, 'Il barone di Fontane Asciutte', in Capuana, *Nuove paesane*, pp. 1-51 (first publ. in *Nuova antologia*, 72 (1897)).

[43] See Luigi Capuana, 'Il benefattore', in Luigi Capuana, *Il benefattore* (Milan: Aliprandi, 1901), pp. 3-94 (first publ. in *Natura ed arte*, November 1900) and Luigi Capuana, 'Un eccentrico', in *Nuove paesane*, pp. 83-95 (first publ. in *La domenica italiana*, April 1897).

[44] See Luigi Capuana, 'Don Ponzio', in Luigi Capuana, *Anime a nudo*, 4th edn (Rome: Società Editrice Nazionale, [n.d.]), pp. 173-83 (first publ. in *La tribuna*, December 1898).

[45] Despite J. H. Whitfield's assertion that 'had it been written thirty years later, it would have been a detective novel' (J. H. Whitfield, *A Short History of Italian Literature*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 245), the whodunit element of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is negligible.

[46] E. A. Walker also notes structural parallels with Greek tragedy (Walker, 'Structural Techniques in Luigi Capuana's Novels', cit., p. 273). He stresses, however, a fatalistically linear movement towards catastrophe. We shall see that Christian subtexts provide a counter-pull.

[47] See Giuseppe Pitré, *Usi e costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo siciliano*, preface by Diego Carpitella, 4 vols (Palermo: Lauriel, 1889; repr. Palermo: Il Vespro, 1978), III, 402-03.

[48] Maryse Jeuland-Meynaud alone notes allusions to *Oedipus Rex* in *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, underlining 'la siccità devastratice' but seeing a clumsy collapse of the 'parallelismo' in the ending of the drought before the punishment of the guilty party (Maryse Jeuland-Meynaud, 'I modelli narrativi tardoromantici nella cultura meridionale', in *Cultura meridionale e letteratura italiana: i modelli narrativi dell'età moderna. Atti dell'XI Congresso dell'Associazione Internazionale per gli Studi di*

*Lingua e Letteratura Italiana*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio (Naples: Loffredo, 1985), pp. 405-55 (pp. 422n-23n)).

[49] See Pitré, III, 67-78.

[50] See 'Don Peppantonio', in Capuana, *Racconti*, II, 129-44 (p. 136), 'Fra Formica', ibid., pp. 157-69 (p. 157, p. 166, and p. 169), 'La casa nuova', in Capuana, *Nuove paesane*, pp. 175-216 (pp. 182-83), 'Il mago', in *Racconti*, II, 242-55 (pp. 245-46), 'Comparatico', ibid., pp. 181-95 (p. 182, p. 189, and p. 192), 'Lo sciancato', ibid., pp. 23-34 (p. 27), 'Rottura col Patriarca', ibid., pp. 35-42, passim, 'Lotta sismica', ibid., pp. 98-109 (p. 107), *Malìa*, in Capuana, *Le paesane*, pp. 303-47 (p. 310), 'La conversione di don Ilario', in *Racconti*, II, pp. 170-80, passim, and 'Notte di san Silvestro', ibid., pp. 53-64, passim.

[51] Ràbbato is the real-life name of a quarter of Mineo.

[52] See Luigi Capuana, 'Zi' Gamella', in *Nuove paesane*, pp. 157-73 (first publ. in *La riforma*, 25-26 February 1895).

[53] See Luigi Capuana, 'Le verginelle', in *Nuove paesane*, pp. 119-35 (first publ. in *La riforma*, 2 June 1895).

[54] Capuana, 'Don Peppantonio', cit., p. 135.

[55] For the traditions surrounding St Agrippina, see Joannes Bollandus, Godefridius Henschenius, and Daniel Papebrochius, *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a Catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur*, 2nd edn, rev. by Jean-Baptiste Carnandet, 67 vols (Paris: Palmé, 1863-1925), XXV (1867), 390-402.

[56] Giovanni Leonardo Omodei, *Lu martiriu e la traslazioni di S. Agrippina* (Mineo: L. Capuana, 1881). Raya records this as an authentic Omodei original (Raya, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana*, pp. 50-51). Scalia, however, notes that Capuana confesses to the hoax in his correspondence (Scalia, pp. 80-81).

[57] Capuana first refers to the novel in February 1881 in a letter to Verga (quoted in L. Perroni and V. Perroni, 'Storia de *I Malavoglia*', *Nuova Antologia*, 408 (1940), 105-131, 237-51 (pp. 129-30)).

[58] It is surely this painting that shames *don* Silvio into shedding his feudal reverence.

[59] St Zosima was martyred with SS. Eutropius and Bonosa under Aurelian.

[60] See Pitré, IV, 463 and 478.

[61] Davies, p. 146.

[62] In Canto 15, Aquilante fights the necromancer Orrilo. In Canto 22, he is blinded by the necromancer Atlas's shield.

[63] The *marchese*'s carnal indulgences are figured in the painting of 'la sconcia donna nuda' (Capuana, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, p. 137) which forms the centrepiece of his great hall.

[64] Agrippina's iconic quality is particularly clear in this sequence. Permitted entry by the allegorical *mamma* Grazia, she suddenly appears framed within a doorway.

[65] Capuana's fiction, then, contradicts his critical assertion that the moral concerns of the Russian novel are purely national.

[66] Portinari alone observes parallels with *Faust*, arguing that the *marchese* is 'una sorta di Faust economico' (Portinari, 'Il verismo squagliato', cit., p. 224).

[67] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust der Tragödie. Erster Teil* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986), p. 72.

[68] See Pitré, IV, 64.

[69] There is a hagiographical subtext to the donation. This parish, focus of Ràbbato's penitential devotions, is most probably dedicated to St Isidore the Husbandman who, as patron saint of farmers, is invoked in time of drought. There may also, however, be an allusion to St Isidore of Chios, whose tongue was cut out upon his refusal to apostatize. Having refused to absolve the *marchese*, *don* Silvio is bound to silence by the sacrament of confession.

[70] Given this episode's prominent hagiographical subtext, it is likely that the choice of Anastasio as the Guardian's name is significant. There are, however, a large number of divine

Anastasii. Perhaps Capuana is referring to Pope Anastasius II, confined by Dante to the Circle of the Heretics for granting communion to one who denies the divine nature of Christ. Perhaps Capuana is merely underlining the ambiguity of the *marchese*'s gesture. He offloads a troublesome image of Christ onto one whose name means 'resurrection'.

[71] The Tarot cards mentioned in this episode -- 'Giove', 'L'impiccato', 'Il matto', 'I trionfi' -- prefigure divine retribution, the suicide of Santi Dimauro, and the *marchese*'s madness.

[72] One might think too of miracles accomplished at the burial-site of the martyred St Isidore with whom we have seen *don* Silvio associated (see note 69).

[73] One might detect echoes between the titles of *Le vergini delle rocce* and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*. Both juxtapose images of sterility (Rocca/rocce) and fertility (verdina/vergini). Capuana's novel may have been conceived long before *Le vergini delle rocce* but was originally to be called *Il marchese di Donnaverdina*, which exclusively implies fertililty.

[74] Daniel 5. 23-28.

[75] Compare with Cantelmo's autumn in the 'deserto laziale' which leads him to 'piena virilità' and teaches him to adorn each day with 'qualche fiero emblema di vittoria' (Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Le vergini delle rocce*, in Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi*, 4th edn, 2 vols (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1953), II, 395-567 (p. 418)).

[76] In his use of Oedipal imagery, Capuana may again be influenced by Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov* features not only a Zosima but an Agrippina. Grushenka/Agrafayna is the Russian equivalent of Pina/Agrippina. Indeed, Grushenka is called 'Agrippina' by her Polish lover (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 486). Just as Capuana's heroine is identified with the soil, Grushenka is a cipher for mother Russia and Mitya Karamazov's rivalry with his father Fyodor for her favours an Oedipal struggle for the nation's soul. A moment of grace prevents Mitya from committing parricide and opens the possibility of redemption for both 'son' and 'mother'. Although the *marchese* commits murder, it is hinted that here too tragic fate may yet be averted. (There are direct references in *The Brothers Karamazov* to the Oedipus legend, such

as Mrs Khokhlavkova's swollen foot, which, in Ratikin's satirical poem, prevents the head from understanding (ibid., p. 680).)

[77] See, in particular, Vetro, p. 47.

[78] One might detect a further hint that Agrippina is a land-spirit or fertility goddess in the novel's original title *Il marchese di Donnaverdina*.

[79] And these words alone surely call into question the extent of Agrippina's feudal servility.

[80] Capuana, 'Il benefattore', cit., p. 6.

# CHAPTER V

## *Rassegnazione*: Capuana and D'Annunzio

### 1. *Critical Approaches to 'Rassegnazione'*

*La sfinge* and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* may both be read as a critique of decadent ideology. The former targets decadent sexual iconography, the latter the ethos of *superomismo*. It is Capuana's final novel, however, which represents his most ambitious response to decadentism and, in particular, to the work of D'Annunzio. The plot of *Rassegnazione* (1907) strikingly resembles that of *Le vergini delle rocce*. Like Claudio Cantelmo, its protagonist, Dario, aims to father 'colui che avrebbe [...] rivelato alla società l'idea nuova e feconda che avrebbe allargato i confini dell'intelligenza, dominato le menti e creato l'avvenire'.[1] Yet the precise relationship between the two texts has divided critics. Where some see in *Rassegnazione* an unambiguously polemical parody of a D'Annunzian model, others detect elements of homage.[2]

The earliest exponent of the first thesis is S. Eugene Scalia (1952). In his analysis, Capuana deems D'Annunzio's Nietzschean premise 'sheer visionary nonsense' and proposes to highlight 'all the tragedy such nonsense could be fraught with' in the hands of a young idealist.[3] So foolishly idealistic, however, is Capuana's protagonist that, for Scalia, a crudely parodic novel utterly lacks tragic impact. Scalia's views are most fully developed by Davies (1979), Storti Abate (1989), and Cappello (1994).[4] Davies acknowledges thematic parallels with writers such as Fogazzaro, Butti, Oriani, Onufrio, and Svevo, but insists that 'without Claudio Cantelmo Dario would have been unthinkable'. The Cantelmo-inspired Chapters 11-20 are 'thinly veiled polemicism' where Capuana combats *superomismo* 'using D'Annunzio's own weapons'.[5] Storti Abate too perceives 'una specie di manifesto dell'anti-dannunzianesimo', yet feels that Capuana's attempt to portray a 'superuomo in negativa' is undermined by an inability

to handle, even parodically, the 'romanzo filosofico' popularized by D'Annunzio.[6] Cappello similarly judges Capuana's 'progetto antidannunziano' beyond his technical grasp. Curiously, though, he lists Cantelmo among those D'Annunzian protagonists 'sempre tesi tra velleità superomistiche e l'inevitable scacco derivante dal confronto con la realtà'.[7] If Cantelmo is himself thwarted, one cannot read Dario's failure as *ipso facto* anti-D'Annunzian. Cappello essentially posits no evolution between the abulic protagonists of the *Romanzi della rosa* and the self-willed Cantelmo. We shall see, however, that *Rassegnazione* polemically contrasts D'Annunzio's earlier protagonists with his later *superuomini* and comments not on a monolithic *dannunzianesimo* but on D'Annunzio's *evolving* thought.

For other critics, Capuana's polemical intent should not be overstated. In his brief remarks on *Rassegnazione*, Madrignani (1970) acknowledges 'l'ambizione di dannunzianamente creare un esempio di antidannunziana "rassegnazione"' but ultimately finds the novel incoherently poised between homage and parody.[8] For Gianni Oliva (1979) too, *Rassegnazione* is a 'romanzo critico verso il superuomismo', which nonetheless reveals an admiration for D'Annunzio's artistic achievement and ideological integrity. In his analysis, a rejection of *superomismo* occurs only *in extremis*.[9] It is Giorgio Pullini (1986), however, who, in the fullest study of the novel to date, most thoroughly charts tension between D'Annunzian and anti-D'Annunzian traits in *Rassegnazione*.

Like Oliva, Pullini argues that *Rassegnazione* concludes on an anti-D'Annunzian note 'dopo essere stato dannunziano per buona parte del libro'.[10] Its anti-*dannunzianesimo* consists essentially 'nel rifiuto della soluzione tragica sensazionale'.[11] For Pullini, Capuana's polemicizes against *Il trionfo della morte* as much as *Le vergini delle rocce*. Following his wife's death, Dario mimics Giorgio Aurispa's quest for lost 'totalità', yet his ultimate 'resignation' is, in Pullini's analysis, an ironic riposte to Aurispa's *Liebestod*. Capuana does not reject decadentism but replaces D'Annunzio's 'decadentismo maggiore' with a minor strand 'dimessa, sfumata, passiva, ma non meno indicativa [...] come

soluzione intimistica (anziché superomistica) di una sconfitta nel rapporto con la storia'.[12]

Pullini's argument has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, he understates *Rassegnazione*'s resemblance to *Le vergini delle rocce*, unconvincingly arguing that the eugenist theme is a contemporary commonplace.[13] Secondly, he shares Cappello's conviction that Cantelmo, like Aurispa, illustrates the decadent topos of the 'scacco'.[14] Yet, even if one interprets the dénouement of *Le vergini delle rocce* as a defeat rather than a temporary setback, it is neither tragic nor sensational. Pullini might, then, logically have concluded that D'Annunzio himself takes a critical distance from his earlier production, and that Capuana's irony is superfluous. The principal shortcoming of Pullini's study, however, is its neglect of Capuana's extensive critical commentary upon D'Annunzio and, in particular, his published review of *Le vergini delle rocce*.

To date, in fact, little attempt has been made to situate *Rassegnazione* within a continuing discourse on D'Annunzio. Its few commentators are frequently hampered by apriorism. Proponents of the parody thesis, in particular, betray a blanket assumption that D'Annunzian elements in the work of a champion of *verismo* must be intended ironically.

In our study, we shall place *Rassegnazione* within a developing meditation on D'Annunzio's work. First, we shall examine Capuana's review of *Le vergini delle rocce*. We shall then explore how his judgment of D'Annunzio is modified in little-studied essays published during the lengthy composition of *Rassegnazione*. Thirdly, we shall observe a continuation of Capuana's critical discourse in his turn-of-the-century literary production. Turning, finally, to *Rassegnazione*, we shall plot more extensive parallels with *Le vergini delle rocce* than have hitherto been acknowledged and explore largely neglected analogies with the *Romanzi della rosa*. We shall find not a crude parody of *superomismo*, but an ambitious and wide-ranging critique of D'Annunzio's evolving ideology and aesthetics.

## 2. *Capuana's Critical Reception of 'Le vergini delle rocce' (1896)*

In our chapter on *La sfinge*, we examined Capuana's response to the *Romanzi della rosa.* and found that he censures D'Annunzio for his delight in artifice and failure to transmute autobiographical material into autonomous form. For Capuana, D'Annunzio is unwilling to immerse himself in his protagonists and thus grants them analytical powers which provide a pretext for authorial intervention and self-portraiture. His criticism is nonetheless tempered by an acknowledgment of D'Annunzio's immense potential. Few other novelists can offer 'uguale intensità di interesse', 'uguale ricchezza di contenuto', and 'uguali bellezze [...] di forma'.[15] There are signs, moreover, that he may ultimately abandon subjectivism for impersonality. Capuana detects a nascent objectivity in *Il trionfo della morte.* Midway through, Aurispa and family suddenly acquire flesh, blood, and bone.[16] D'Annunzio's next novel, however, dashes Capuana's hopes.

Capuana's review of *Le vergini delle rocce*, in May 1896, is perhaps the most consummate *stroncatura* of his critical career. He begins by expressing a readiness to accept 'tutto il contenuto possibile, a patto però che egli prenda forma vitale'.[17] The writings of both D'Annunzio and Verga are underpinned by a philosophical or scientific concept, but, for the critic, 'l'un concetto vale l'altro'.[18] His job is merely to assess the realization of concept in form. Yet Capuana's summary of the two writers' ideological positions plainly reveals his hostility to D'Annunzio's Nietzschean premise. Where Verga portrays 'la darwiniana lotta per la vita', D'Annunzio espouses 'la pessimistica e aristocratica filosofia del pensatore tedesco finito in un ospedale di matti'.

For both Verga and D'Annunzio, Capuana continues, characters are ideologically charged symbols. Where Verga, however, creates 'simboli vivi, che ignorano la loro qualità di simboli, e non si analizzano da per loro',[19] D'Annunzio's Cantelmo is so complete a self-analyst that 'non sa muovere un dito senza distillare tutte le

conseguenze più riposte e più misteriose di quella mossa'.[20] Yet this obsessive reasoner, familiar with every conquest of the 'scienza positiva odierna', is suddenly 'invasato' by the idea of creating the supreme Italian type, 'anzi il futuro Re di Roma!', using 'mezzi diversi da quelli stabiliti dalla natura'. Flouting genetics, he seeks his bride in an aristocratic family 'composta di idioti, di pazzi, di nevrotiche, di isteriche'.[21] The sheer incoherence of his thoughts and actions prevent him from achieving 'forma vitale'. He may be a symbol but is no 'creatura umana'.

Capuana purports, then, to accept D'Annunzio's concept *a priori* and to chart a failure of artistic realization. Yet he essentially argues that D'Annunzio is thwarted by the inherent absurdity of the concept embodied in Claudio Cantelmo. Responding shortly afterwards to Ugo Ojetti's defence of *Le vergini delle rocce*, Capuana again targets its ideological premise. D'Annunzio flouts 'una logica severa a cui le volizioni e le azioni dell'anima nostra debbono necessariamente conformarsi, anche nell'errore'.[22] Undertaking an enterprise 'con mezzi disadatti al suo intento', his creature must be judged 'o pazza o imbecille, o per lo meno non sana'. He is no 'creatura equilibrata, sana, da poter dare l'illusione che essa continui nelle pagine del libro le pagine della vita'.[23] Were he a 'creatura viva', he would realize 'come attuare la sua volontà con mezzi umani, nella società dove il caso l'ha fatta nascere'. Perhaps sensing that the insistence on a balanced, strong-willed protagonist ill-suits the author of *Profumo* and *La sfinge*, Capuana concedes that Cantelmo might be credible as a 'Don Chisciotte dell'ideale aristocratico'. He detects, however, no hint of satire.

These remarks would surely lead us to seek a satirical agenda behind Dario's imitation of Cantelmo in *Rassegnazione*. They do not indicate unambiguously whether Capuana believes that D'Annunzio consciously portrays the failure of an ideal. Plainly, however, Capuana considers Cantelmo's ideal so flawed as to support only a comic treatment. Yet we shall find that *Rassegnazione* reflects an attenuation of Capuana's criticism of D'Annunzio during the decade-long elaboration of the novel.

3. *Capuana as a Critic of D'Annunzio 1900-15*

*Rassegnazione*'s lengthy gestation has been largely overlooked. There has, in fact, been some confusion as to its dates of composition. Pullini, Storti Abate, Cappello, and Paolo Maria Sipala (1974) affirm that, although published in 1907, it is complete in 1897.[24] Their reading is based on the preface to the first edition where Capuana recalls presenting a chapter of the novel, 'allora inedito', to Lucio D'Ambra in that year.[25] This dating certainly facilitates a reading of *Rassegnazione* as polemical riposte to *Le vergini delle rocce* (serialized January-June 1895). One may, however, construct a compositional history which permits us to discount it.

A manuscript note reveals that Capuana began writing *Rassegnazione* on 30 January 1894.[26] It cannot, therefore, originate as a response to the then unpublished *Le vergini delle rocce*. In a letter dated 14 February 1895, Capuana informs De Roberto that 'la prima parte' is almost complete. Another dated 19 October 1895 specifies that six chapters are ready.[27] A fragment appears in *Marzocco* on 15 March 1896,[28] and, in October of that year, he tells De Roberto that he has signed a contract for *Rassegnazione* and is hurrying to complete it.[29] It is still, however, unfinished in 1900 when the first eleven chapters appear in *Flegrea*.[30] The manuscript note states that, having published these chapters and written Chapters 12-13, Capuana suspends composition until 15 April 1906. He completes the novel on 5 July of that year. If fourteen of *Rassegnazione*'s twenty-seven chapters are written in 1906, we must abandon the tradition of placing *Rassegnazione* before *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* in chronological surveys of Capuana's work. We are also bound to confront the critical writings on D'Annunzio which postdate the review of *Le vergini delle rocce*.

Capuana follows this *stroncatura* with quite his warmest appraisal of D'Annunzio's narrative. Yet his essay on *Il fuoco*

(1900) begins with the observation that the novel is even more autobiographical than its predecessors. So completely, however, is D'Annunzio duplicated in his protagonist, and so coherent is the marriage of art and life in Éffrena's 'sogno di bellezza e di dominio' and 'esaltazione di sé medesimo' that we are simultaneously 'stupiti da tanta audacia e da tanta improntitudine' and 'soggiogati, vinti, affascinati'.[31] Here D'Annunzio does not project himself upon pallid mannequins but puts 'tutto sé stesso' into his protagonist. Capuana still urges D'Annunzio towards 'diretto contatto con la realtà esteriore', but remains impressed by the vigour with which he pursues the ideal of art-in-life.[32] He nonetheless reveals ethical misgivings in remarking that La Foscarina irradiates the novel 'con lo splendore della sua bellezza morale', while Éffrena is 'senza scrupoli di grande o di piccola morale'.[33]

Only Oliva has sought to explain why Capuana tempers his criticism of D'Annunzio's aestheticism.[34] He perceives an echo of Maupassant's demand that the critic approach works 'sans parti pris, sans opinions préconçues' and judge them 'uniquement au point de vue de leur valeur artistique en acceptant *a priori* les idées générales d'où elles sont nées'.[35] A writer must be granted the absolute right to pursue his 'conception personelle de l'art'. Otherwise, 'c'est vouloir le forcer à modifier son tempérament, récuser son originalité'.

We have seen, however, that Capuana already professes similar principles in his piece on *Le vergini delle rocce*. These do not prevent him from targeting D'Annunzio's ideological premise. A more probable stimulus is the critical writings of Croce and Pirandello which lead Capuana to seek, above all, 'la sincerità', a quality which he can no longer deny D'Annunzio. The critic, he acknowledges, cannot say to D'Annunzio: 'Sii diverso da quello che sei stato finora'.[36]

Capuana does not specifically comment on any of D'Annunzio's works following *Il fuoco*. In his only subsequent published discussion of D'Annunzio, he again, however, expresses readiness

to accept the artist on his own terms. In 'L'arte e la vita' (1905), he acknowledges that both D'Annunzio's 'grandissimi pregi' and 'grandi difetti' are inherent to a sincerely expressed artistic personality.[37] It is, nonetheless, the 'difetti' that are stressed. In his contempt for the 'rappresentazione immediata' of the objective world and in his efforts to transform, or rather deform, 'i comuni impuri elementi', D'Annunzio disregards the evolution of the narrative genre towards a DeSanctisian identification of form and content, where observable reality is impersonally rendered. His theory that 'la funzione dell'Arte è unicamente funzione di Bellezza' is, for Capuana, potentially tenable.[38] In practice, however, beauty is often 'ristretta a funzione esteriore di stile' and directed towards the 'morbosa eccitazione di certi sentimenti per mezzo di artificiose stranezze di concezione'. If, therefore, one cannot question D'Annunzio's artistic integrity, his influence is ahistorical and potentially pernicious.

Commentators have seen Capuana's subsequent critical silence as evidence that he considers D'Annunzio 'beyond esthetic redemption'.[39] Yet correspondence between the two writers suggests otherwise. On 23 April 1911, Capuana writes to D'Annunzio, announcing that 'mancano soltanto due capitoli' of a monograph on his work first announced in 1901.[40] He commiserates with D'Annunzio over the 'vilissimo chiasso fatto intorno al tuo nome da una stampa senza coscienza e senza pudore' and congratulates him for working unflappably to honour Italy abroad 'con le magnifiche risorse del tuo mirabile ingegno'. Arguing that 'forse io soltanto ho saputo costantemente amarti e ammirarti, senza obbedire alle [*sic*] influenza della *moda*', he begs D'Annunzio to send a print-copy of *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien* so that he might review it 'all'indomani della prima rappresentazione'. D'Annunzio did not receive this letter, but on 20 June 1911, Capuana writes again assuring D'Annunzio of the 'interesse di ammiratore e di amico' with which he has read of a theatrical triumph that few can have savoured 'con maggiore sincerità e con più entusiasmo'.[41]

This may resemble flattery in pursuit of a journalistic coup, but Capuana comes to D'Annunzio's defence elsewhere in his correspondence. On 17 July 1909, he congratulates Alberto Lumbroso on his criticism of Borgese's monograph on D'Annunzio. Capuana's own study will be more 'equanime' and rise above 'una maligna indiscrezione su la vita privata del grande scrittore'.[42] Styling himself 'un antico ma non cieco ammiratore del D'Annunzio', he boasts that his 'rispettosa sincerità' has never provoked 'la minima ombra tra il D'Annunzio e me, legati da affettuosa e non mai smentita amicizia'.[43]

As evidence of readiness to be 'onestamente sincero', however, he cites only his reviews of *Giovanni Episcopo* and *Il fuoco*. The latter, as we have seen, is quite his most indulgent appraisal. He conspicuously fails, conversely, to cite his censure of *Le vergini delle rocce*. In these final years, Capuana seeks retrospectively to attenuate his criticism of D'Annunzio, stressing a perennial 'admiration'. His discourse on D'Annunzio ends, publicly, with a laudatory course on his verse given at the University of Catania in 1912-13,[44] and, privately, with an epistolary attack on Ladenarda's scurrilous *La superfemina abbruzzese*.[45]

Capuana's post-1900 writings on D'Annunzio might, then, lead us to anticipate a more conditional critique in *Rassegnazione* than that presented in the review of *Le vergini delle rocce*. This is no critical volte-face. Capuana continues to oppose D'Annunzio on both aesthetic and ethical grounds. He is increasingly impressed, however, by the integrity of D'Annunzio's ideal of art-in-life. We should recall that Capuana offers *Rassegnazione* for serialization in D'Annunzio's review *Rinascimento*.[46] The proposal may be mischievous but suggests that Capuana did not consider his novel a glaring spoof.

Essays and correspondence do not, however, exhaust Capuana's discourse on D'Annunzio. It is extended in a number of neglected turn-of-the-century literary pieces. In particular, the short stories 'Segreti d'arte' (1899) and 'Dolce potere' (1908) and the play

*Gastigo* (1900) offer further invaluable hints as to why Capuana's criticism of D'Annunzio is gradually tempered.

## 4. *Capuana's Metaliterary Discourse on D'Annunzio*

The similarly plotted 'Segreti d'arte' and *Gastigo* are written at either side of Capuana's review of *Il fuoco*. The former echoes his critique of the *Romanzi della rosa*. Its protagonist, Luciano Ércoli, fictionalizes a recent affair in his novel *L'enimma*. This, like its predecessors, is 'una specie di autobiografia appena dissimulata'.[47] Readers are attracted not only by authentic talent but by a 'malsana curiosità che spingeva a indovinare sotto i finti nomi i veri'. The final pages, a transparent pastiche of D'Annunzio's prose-style, are quoted in full.

Like D'Annunzio, Ércoli refines 'i fatti della realtà', granting them 'altro valore e intensità più drammatica'.[48] Through his fictional counterpart, Diego Pagani, he portrays his real-life actions 'in miglior luce'. Pagani conducts an 'esperienza in *anima vili*', confident that both artist and scientist may commit actions which 'senza il sereno scopo dell'esperimento psicologico' might offend bourgeois morality.[49]

Upon completing *L'enimma*, however, Ércoli does not experience his habitual sense of detachment from his characters and from their living models. He regrets, conversely, that only writing permits him to savour sensations which, in real time, he has no leisure to savour. 'Impigliato nelle stessi reti da lui stese', his passion for his former mistress, Laura Lupis (Gabriella in the novel), is thus rekindled.[50] He seeks to resume the relationship, but, to his astonishment, Laura resists. He finds himself torn between regretting the suffering inflicted upon a loving nature and a pride in his power which recalls Tullio Hermil, protagonist of *L'innocente*. His vanity is nonetheless piqued. Hoping to force her return to his 'nido', he causes her husband to find their love-letters. Expelled from the marital home, Laura, however, commits suicide. Ércoli completes the sequel to *L'enimma*, reproducing the

episode, save for the attribution of the treachery to a rival. Describing Gabriella's burial, he scarcely thinks 'alla infelice creatura da lui spinta al suicidio'.[51] The novel is concluded 'senza che il cuore gli palpitasse'.

Ércoli, then, commits the two literary sins that Capuana most consistently condemns in D'Annunzio: *autobiografismo* and the refinement of objective reality. He is also, however, subject to a moral critique only adumbrated in Capuana's essays. Capuana shows how aestheticism may brutalize and the male writer's 'arte vissuta' spell social ruin for his female partner. He again echoes the Catholic moralism of Bourget's *Le Disciple*, as a psychological experimenter is caught in his own net.

The moralistic tone of 'Segreti d'arte' is reproduced in the similarly plotted *Gastigo*. The novelist Elio Ramis, besieged in his 'Villa Elios' by Italian and foreign admirers, has contracted a fatal disease in his decadent youth. Before his death, he wishes to repair the wrong done to Leonia, barely disguised heroine of his novels and mother of his daughter Irma. She has disappeared after the publication of his masterpiece *La nemica*, a 'splendida calunnia',[52] in which Ramis both profanes their love and compromises Leonia socially. Consumed with remorse, he unsuccessfully pursues her. His quest is related in the celebrated *Angoscia suprema*, scarcely fictionalized 'pagine autobiografiche sincerissime'.[53]

Remorse eventually leads him to perceive his error in placing 'l'arte da un lato, la realtà dall'altro'. Treating relationships as raw material, he causes not only Leonia's ruin but the death of his son who, stung by Ramis's accusations that he is a bourgeois philistine, enlists in the Greek wars. Irma too, he realizes, has been corrupted both by his works which teach her to 'vivere per sé [...] come se il mondo fosse un deserto' and by his example of negligent fatherhood.[54] Brought up to believe her mother dead, she is tormented by class-mates who insinuate the truth behind Ramis's fictions.

Aware that 'la vita si vendica' upon our frail 'organismo', Ramis now believes that 'bisogna accettare la vita qual è, con le sue leggi, coi suoi pregiudizi, che sono leggi anch'essi'.[55] Yet he maintains 'un sogno d'arte'.[56] Rather than transmute life into fiction, he now wishes to create a living work of art by reuniting mother and daughter and obtaining forgiveness. He finally locates Leonia, now a prostitute. She, however, brands his ambition the literary pose of an 'artifice di inganni'.[57] Her soul and 'viscere materne' have been uprooted by his 'legge inebbriante (la libertà dell'amore, delle passioni; il trionfo dei sensi; l'amore che santifica tutto, la passione che giustifica tutto, i sensi che assolvono tutto)'. Ramis cannot convince her that he repents challenging 'tutte le leggi umane e divine'.[58]

In desperation, he confronts Leonia with Irma. Irma, however, accuses her mother of egoism in both bearing and abandoning a stigmatized, illegitimate child. Leonia departs, and Irma, appalled to find genius coupled with 'tanta miseria di animo', prepares to leave her father and to enter a nunnery 'per espiare [...] colpe altrui'.[59] Perceiving, however, that Ramis is both penitent and moribund, she begins her 'caritatevole missione' by nursing him.

To a degree, Ramis repeats Ércoli's errors. Subordinating life to art and elevating brute egoism to a 'legge inebbriante', he disregards the social consquences for partner and children. Yet, where Ércoli is dehumanized, Ramis claims to find redemption in art. The remorse-fuelled *Angoscia suprema* is a 'grido di aspirazione all'alto'.[60] He perceives, however, that even this *mea culpa* puts art before life. He thus seeks to enact its fiction, to create 'l'arte in vita'. Yet his narrative creation has no place in reality. In *Angoscia suprema* Leonia becomes 'la divina che il dolore ha sublimato', forgiving 'il pentito.' Ramis slides from the misogyny of *La nemica* to the opposite extreme of decadent iconography. The thwarted Ramis declares all art 'un inganno', 'una falsità'.[61]

Yet *Gastigo* is more ambiguous than its protagonist's come-uppance might suggest. If he unequivocally censures the

exploitation of life for artistic ends, Capuana's stance on 'l'arte in vita' is less clear-cut. On one hand, Ramis is mocked for presuming to stage-manage life. Despite his claims, he is clearly far from accepting 'la vita qual è'. However honourable his intentions, he remains the decadent demiurge. On the other, it is hinted that his error may lie not in the desire to render fiction realty but in the ideological shortcomings of the fiction itself. His quest for 'l'arte in vita' is driven by a vision of moral beauty which, if refuted by Leonia, finally conquers Irma. If he exchanges one form of *superomismo* for another, his new creed is at least noble.

For Luciano Ércoli, conversely, art remains the end of life. If he seeks to experience the exquisite sensations that he has only imagined, it is with a view to refining and to exorcizing them on the page. The transition from Ércoli's 'arte vissuta' to Ramis's 'arte in vita' may offer an insight into Capuana's preference for *Il fuoco* over D'Annunzio's earlier narrative. Through Stelio Éffrena, D'Annunzio rejects an aestheticism which places 'l'arte da un lato, la vita da un altro' in favour of a 'connubio' of life and art. The transcendence of the poetics of the *Romanzi della rosa* permits the penitent D'Annunzio to create his first authentic character in La Foscarina.

Read alongside the review of *Il fuoco*, *Gastigo* warns against interpreting *Rassegnazione* as solely a skit upon *Le vergini delle rocce*. Certainly, Capuana condemns the *superomismo* of both Cantelmo and Éffrena. If, however, he ridicules the former's anti-scientific behaviour, he recognizes the integrity and potential moral beauty of Éffrena's ideal of 'l'arte in vita'. We shall find that Dario's pursuit of a similar 'connubio' of art and life reflects the greater openness to D'Annunzian idealism visible in Capuana's later criticism.

'Dolce potere', conversely, suggests that the 'resignation' for which Dario rejects *superomismo* may not be presented uncritically. It features another D'Annunzian novelist, Arnaldo Rocchi, painter of 'le complicate sensazioni' of a society where he

lives 'con artificiosa ostinazione'.[62] Deserted by a fatal beauty, he retires to a rural hermitage to recuperate by completing an abandoned novel. Unable to work, however, he encounters a cousin in a local nunnery. Beside the 'eroico sforzo e rassegnata soddisfazione' of the nuns, Rocchi's 'eccitamenti pretesi artistici, pretesi intellettuali' appear inane.[63] Rocchi gradually acquires 'un nuovo senso di arte, qualcosa di finemente ironico, di amaramente sarcastico'.[64] Returning to his novel, he underlines 'il ridicolo, la malvagità, la miseria' in characters originally conceived as 'trionfatori della vita, dominatori della società, liberi da ogni soggezione di leggi e di morale'.[65] To his surprise, however, he is constrained to portray the nuns equally ironically, as if they had infringed or falsified 'le sacrosante leggi della Natura'. Published shortly after *Rassegnazione*, 'Dolce potere' hints that Dario's final resignation may not be endorsed as unambiguously as critical tradition maintains.

* * * *

Examining Capuana's criticism and metaliterary creative production in the years following the publication of *Le vergini delle rocce*, we have noted, then, a growing respect for D'Annunzio's ideal of art-in-life, together with suggestions that Dario may be censured for renouncing life. We must, then, guard against reading *Rassegnazione* as either an unambiguously polemical skit or a *Bildungsroman* charting a steady path from *superomismo* to healthy 'resignation'. Turning to the novel, we shall uncover an altogether suppler discourse which both acknowledges evolution in D'Annunzio's thought and critically examines contrasting ideologies of resignation.

## 5. *'Rassegnazione'*

*Rassegnazione* readily divides into five parts: Chapters 1-8 (Dario's childhood and adolescence up to his father's death), 9-14 (the search for a bride and first attempt to father a *superuomo*), 15-20 (the second attempt leading to his wife's death in

childbirth), 21-22 (Dario's systematic quest for pleasure), and 23-27 (suicide averted by the rescue and adoption of the child Rosa/Fausta). The first four are each closely modelled on a different D'Annunzian archetype.

a) *Chapters 1-8: 'Rassegnazione' and 'Il trionfo della morte'*

Little in the novel's opening chapters suggests a parody of *Le vergini delle rocce*. Dario initially appears an improbable acolyte of Cantelmo. He issues not from a race of 'dominatori' but from the provincial bourgeoisie. Lacking Cantelmo's 'virilità' and 'pienezza',[66] he is convinced of his physical inferiority and intellectual mediocrity and awed by his father's will and vitality. Where Cantelmo disciplines both mind and body, Dario lives 'soltanto con la testa'.[67] While Cantelmo struggles to marshal the 'irrompere confuso e innumerevole delle sensazioni' (p. 405), the impassive Dario is nicknamed 'mummia' (p. 11) by his schoolmates. If Cantelmo co-ordinates both 'virtù sincere' and 'sinceri difetti' into 'un disegno premeditato' (p. 410), Dario randomly seeks 'la coscienza della mia vita' (p. 10) and abhors his least failing.

The one trait that Dario and Cantelmo nonetheless share is the conviction that 'il mondo è la rappresentazione della sensibilità e del pensiero di pochi uomini superiori' (*Le vergini delle rocce*, p. 405). Dario believes that life attains meaning only at 'il suo più alto grado di espressione e di forza' (p. 33) and aspires to be a man 'nel più nobile significato di quella parola'. He must thus be 'artista o pensatore, giacchè uomo di azione non era il caso; ma grande artista, gran pensatore... o niente!' (p. 34). Persuaded of his mediocrity, however, he fears that he may be solely the 'zero che dà valore a un'unità' (p. 50).

If Capuana is preparing a polemical pastiche of *Le vergini delle rocce*, he must appear to load the dice by positing too grotesque a disparity between Dario's debilities and his superhuman ideal. At this stage, however, Dario more readily evokes other *fin de siècle* fictional counterparts. Davies rightly notes his resemblance to

Attilio Valda, protagonist of Butti's *L'automa* (1892).[68] Like Dario, Valda issues from a commercially minded bourgeois family. In childhood, he too shuns company and exercise for isolated study. He shares Dario's sensation of 'anticipata vecchiezza' (*Rassegnazione*, p. 11) and, like Capuana's 'mummia', suffers from 'passività bovina' and 'automatica inerzia'.[69] Both Dario and Valda lament their lucid 'indifferenza'.[70]

Each, moreover, is conceived as representative of a generational malaise. Capuana attempts to portray 'una crisi dello spirito di parecchi nostri contemporanei' (p. [ii]) and Butti 'un caso tipico della presente estenuazione'.[71] Yet we have seen that, in his review of *L'automa*, Capuana is unpersuaded by Butti's analysis of a contemporary crisis. He deems Valda merely typical of 'gli esseri fiacchi e sconclusionati di tutti i luoghi e di tutti i tempi'.[72] In *Rassegnazione*, Capuana partly echoes Butti's depiction of contemporary 'estenuazione', but rejects as simplistic Butti's analysis of its ideological roots.

Butti essentially follows Bourget in targeting the debilitating *esprit d'analyse* of positivism. In the first part of *Rassegnazione*, Capuana initially seems to adopt an identical perspective. The precocious senility that his protagonist shares with Attilio Valda recalls the 'précoce vieillese d'âme et d'esprit' of Bourget's Armand de Querne in*Un crime d'amour* (1886).[73] Like Dario, who absorbs 'il sottile veleno del pensiero' (p. 33) from his reading of 'tutto lo scibile umano ripensato, analizzato, rifatto dalla positiva scienza moderna' (p. 32), Armand is the abulic product of an energetic forebear, undermined by a positivist education.

In his Bourgettian traits, however, Dario most nearly resembles neither Attilio Valda nor Bourget's own protagonists. A comparison between the first part of *Rassegnazione* and *Il trionfo della morte* will reveal, instead, striking parallels between Dario and D'Annunzio's Giorgio Aurispa. These will lead us to see where Capuana departs from Butti's portrayal of generational crisis. We shall find that Capuana neither debunks nor mimics decadent psychological models but refines a canonically decadent analysis.

If Dario's socio-economic milieu appears modelled on that of Attilio Valda, his immediate household evokes the 'La casa paterna' section of *Il trionfo della morte*. Like Dario, Aurispa is daunted by his father's carnal presence. In both, physical repulsion combines with envy of their forebear's undivided vitality. Where Dario asks 'come mai da quel colosso ero potuto scaturire io, fragile creatura vissuta quasi a stento?' (p. 8), Aurispa marvels, 'io, io sono il figliuolo di quest'uomo!'.[74] (Both are most stuck by the contrast at the family table, observing their father's gargantuan appetite.) It is his father's death by apoplexy which first shakes Dario's faith in the 'pochi uomini superiori'. If this 'gigante' can be felled, to what can man aspire?[75]

A further comparison may be drawn between Dario's efforts to acquire 'la coscienza della sua vita' and Aurispa's search for his 'vera vita' (p. 731), his 'vera essenza' (p. 871). Both suffer from a paralysed consciousness. The young Dario complains of incurable insensitivity and is 'incapace di ricevere intero l'urto delle impressioni esterne [...], quasi i miei nervi fossero stati di bambagia' (p. 10). He recalls that 'le sensazioni mi sfioravano appena, si smussavano nel mio contatto' (p. 16). Aurispa too feels that his consciousness is 'come ricoperta da una superficie opaca che pareva mettere tra quella e la realtà una specie di diaframma; il quale anche talvolta si spessiva così da divenire completamente isolante impedendo le percezioni del mondo esterno' (p. 776).

To a degree, Aurispa inherits his inability to commune directly with external reality from Andrea Sperelli and Tullio Hermil. In these, the Bourgettian *esprit d'analyse* creates a radical *dédoublement* between an observing and an experiencing self. Through psychological experimentation and the aesthetic elaboration of intricate mental states, *dédoublement* (or *sdoppiamento*) evolves into *multanimità*, the artful multiplication of the self. The slightest sensual stimulus or physiological alteration is capable of transforming Tullio Hermil, for example, into 'un altro uomo'.[76]

Aurispa, however, is less schematically Bourgettian than his predecessors. Lacking their demiurgic talent, he vainly struggles to master analytical powers which he essentially turns against himself. His 'preoccupazione della perspicacia' (p. 622) leads him to diagnose in himself and others illusory psychological intricacies. More hopelessly than Sperelli or Hermil, he flounders in 'il miscuglio dei sentimenti ideali e reali' (p. 813).

It is perhaps the suggestion that Aurispa is consistently misled by analytical zeal which leads Capuana to prefer *Il trionfo della morte* to the other *Romanzi della rosa*. We have seen how, in *La sfinge*, he charts the dangers of the decadent appetite for psychological complexity which Capuana terms 'bizantinismo'. Hungry for 'novità' and bewitched by 'tutte le sciocche combinazioni della pretesa riflessione moderna', his writer-hero creates 'riflessi, echi di sé stesso, falsità'.[77] Montani's self-judgment recalls Capuana's reviews of *Il piacere* and *L'innocente*, where both D'Annunzio and his protagonists are censured for abusing analysis. He may have detected in *Il trionfo della morte* welcome signs of self-criticism.

The dangers of 'bizantinismo' are repeatedly exposed in Capuana's turn-of-the-century short fiction, notably 'Lettera d'uno scettico' (1904). The protagonist, Cesare, presents his feelings after a lover's departure as proof that 'il nostro io è doppio, triplo, quadruplo e forse indefinitivamente multiplo'.[78] A grieving 'fanciullo' gives way to a coldly admiring 'indifferente'. The 'indifferente' is prevented from losing his *sang-froid* by a third 'io', the 'scettico', who detects a disparity between his lover's 'forma esteriore' and 'interiore'. A fourth self finally scandalizes the 'fanciullone' by observing that 'è da stupidi occuparsi di esteriore e d'interiore trattandosi di una donna'.

Here Capuana does not so much pre-empt Pirandello's multiple self as parody passages such as the following from Bourget's *Le Disciple*:

Dès lors, à côté des deux autres personnes qui vivaient déjà en moi, entre l'adolescent encore fervent, régulier, pieux, et l'adolescent romanesque imaginatif, un troisième individu naquit et grandit, un sensuel, tourmenté des désirs les plus bassement brutaux.[79]

Cesare, however, rapidly undermines his own analysis as he accuses himself of mocking his genuine suffering. Since donning 'la comoda maschera dello scetticismo', he has merely recited a 'commedia'.[80] He yearns to liberate the 'povera creatura sofferente' buried beneath his fictions. The 'abitudine di fingere e di mentire per vanità di apparire affatto diversi dagli altri' has sabotaged his relationships. Even now, writing to his closest friend, he has surrendered to 'il finto me, [...] il miserabile vanitoso che pretende di apparir superuomo'.[81] He is thus punished for falsifying 'la natura umana' in order to appear 'un vincitore su tutte le leggi sociali'. As the tale progresses, Cesare alternately celebrates and denies his multiform personality. We are left unsure whether *multanimità* is the authentic consequence of an abuse of analysis or the 'Byzantine' diagnosis of a dilettante psychologist.[82]

*La sfinge* and 'Lettera d'uno scettico' imply that the *esprit d'analyse* induces a form of moral hypochondria in which the sufferer describes illusory psychological states. Capuana criticizes the D'Annunzio of *Il piacere* and *L'innocente* for glamorizing the analytical excesses which he purports to deplore. With Aurispa's 'preoccupazione della perspicacia', conversely, D'Annunzio approaches Capuana's own diagnosis.

*Rassegnazione*, however, represents a more radical revision of the thesis proposed by Bourget and Butti than *Il trionfo della morte*. Dario initially attributes both his aridity and his faith in the intellect to his readings in positivism. In Chapter 8, however, he modifies his diagnosis, recalling his former tutor, a Hegelian ex-priest, who had fulminated against 'tutti quanti i positivisti' (p. 74). Hegelian ideas, which he had then found unconvincing, have fermented in his mind 'commiste e confuse con tante altre idee di

opposta natura' (p. 75). They, he now perceives, are primarily responsible for his 'sogno di grandezza'.

Tonelli (1928) detects here a reworking of *Le disciple*, arguing that, where Bourget targets Taine and the *esprit d'analyse*, Capuana attributes aridity, misogyny, and *superomismo* to Hegel and a broader 'male dell'intelligenza'.[83] Certainly, Dario's tutor might appear a comic inversion of Robert Greslou's positivist mentor, Adrien Sixte. Where Sixte's monastic existence belies his materialist doctrines, Capuana's Hegelian is a gluttonous womanizer who preaches absolute idealism. Both tacitly undermine the absolutism of their teachings, reaching a *modus vivendi* with the ideal and real respectively. In each case, the 'disciple' fails to learn from the disparity between word and deed.

Ultimately, however, Tonelli's formulation proves too schematic. He disregards Dario's subsequent immersion in positivism. The opening chapters of *Rassegnazione* suggest, rather, that, in his study of a generational sickness, Capuana refines both the canonically Bourgettian thesis expounded in Butti's *L'automa* and the revised analysis proposed in *Il trionfo della morte*. For Capuana, abulia does not primarily stem from the *esprit d'analyse* but from the vestigial idealism which renders self-analysis destructive. With his exalted conception of human potential, Dario's analytical powers serve merely to highlight his personal shortcomings. The 'riflessione' that divides Dario's consciousness and saps his will is, as in *La sfinge* and *Profumo*, a *combination* of positivism and idealism.

Yet, as the first part of *Rassegnazione* draws to a close, the narrating Dario increasingly attributes his inertia to idealism alone. His youthful Hegelianism had revealed the chasm 'tra quel che sapevo di essere e quel che avrei voluto e non avrei potuto mai essere' (p. 9). It had highlighted his intellectual mediocrity, physical frailty, and lack of any 'attitudine speciale' (p. 23), earlier presented as subjective sensations, but now recast as objective fact. These persuade the young Dario of the futility of his aspirations, a conclusion that the narrating Dario endorses.

Dario's self-portrait resembles, in fact, less the *malato della volontà* of decadentism than the *malato d'ideali* of the *Scapigliatura*.

We are invited, nonetheless, to question his analysis. We should note that the youthful Dario persistently envies others their formidable will. He notes that, in his father's eyes, 'lampeggiava indomabile la volontà' (p. 8). He judges his friends Lenzi and Bissi 'organismi perfetti' (p. 25) who 'sapevano quel che volevano [...], e già coordinavano ogni loro minimo atto con quello scopo'. He is even impressed by the 'ferma volontà' (p. 37) of a seven-year-old boy. These confessions might lead us to query Dario's presentation of the critical concluding episode of the first part of *Rassegnazione*, the thwarting of his literary ambitions. Where Dario sees the failure of an ideal, we may perceive a failure of the will.

The reader of *Rassegnazione* must guard against two dangers. Capuana's explicitly didactic intent has often led commentators to assume, first, that he fully endorses his narrator's conclusions and, second, that the mature Dario comprehensively underlines the errors of his younger self. We shall see, conversely, that the older Dario's self-understanding is partial, and that Capuana keeps him at an ironic distance. Dario's aborted attempt to produce a masterpiece is the first hint that his final 'resignation' derives from imperfect self-knowledge.

Dario the narrator repeatedly cites his literary failure as proof of sterility. Yet his presentation of the episode casts doubt upon his conclusions. He first confesses that, in anticipation of failure, he had long avoided testing his literary talents. Yet finally, he writes, 'mi lasciai trascinare' (p. 26). He recognizes the source-material of a piece by his writer-friend Bissi. The mystery of the literary process is revealed, and he resolves to attempt something similar. For two weeks he struggles against 'la resistenza che la forma mi opponeva' (p. 30), attributing his difficulties to inexperience. Finally, however, his critical conscience persuades him of his 'impotenza creativa'. Where he had first perceived 'una benefica

rivelazione di me a me stesso' (p. 29), he now regrets the illusion that 'un uomo nuovo si fosse improvvisamente rivelato dentro di me' (p. 27).[84]

Yet, as the mature Dario derides his youthful belief that a masterpiece would spring from a 'confuso ribollimento' (p. 29), we must feel that he is equally naive in judging his unsurprising failure definitive. We shall see that his friends consistently chide him for neglecting his talent whilst themselves building literary careers from equally unpromising beginnings. Even his mother questions his despair: 'Hai tentato, ti è parso di non aver forza da riuscire, ed hai perduta la fiducia che ti aveva sostenuto finora.' (p. 43).

Dario maintains that his will is dashed by unyielding form. We perceive, however, that it is eroded by an *esprit d'analyse* which measures the distance between real and ideal. It is not Hegelianism which alerts him to his shortcomings but positivist self-analysis and biological fatalism. We note that Dario anticipates failure; it thus cannot surprise us that he balks at the first setback. He further betrays himself by envying the strong-willed while attributing none of his personal failings to abulia. We must not be misled by Dario's enumeration of his weaknesses. He essentially presents the self-flattering portrait of a *malato d'ideali*. Reading between the lines, however, we perceive that he is at least equally a *malato della volontà*.

Chapters 1-8 of *Rassegnazione* reveal, then, not an anti-D'Annunzian polemic but a refinement of the Bourgettian psychology which informs the *Romanzi della rosa*. The abulia, alienation, and creative impotence which Dario shares with Giorgio Aurispa do not derive solely from positivistic abuse of analysis. The younger Dario's analytical powers are rendered destructive by vestiges of Hegelian idealism. Dario the narrator, however, does not fully perceive how positivism and idealism work in tandem. We shall see that he consistently presents failures of the will as the thwarting of ideals and thus fails to achieve self-understanding.

b) *Chapters 9-14: 'Rassegnazione' and 'Le vergini delle rocce'*

We have detected few echoes of *Le vergini delle rocce* in the opening chapters of *Rassegnazione*. They suggest, rather, a refinement of analyses of generational crisis current in the early 1890s. One might conjecture that the novel, begun, as we have seen, before the publication of *Le vergini delle rocce*, originates as a riposte to novels such as *L'automa* and *Il trionfo della morte*. Chapters 9-14, conversely, conspicuously mirror *Le vergini delle rocce* and indicate that Capuana does not solely revise diagnoses of spiritual malaise but questions proposals for regeneration.

These chapters relate Dario's first attempt to father a *superuomo*. Yet, at the beginning of this sequence, he appears to have foregone idealism. He now seems reconciled to his literary failure and resigned to putting his moderate talents to practical use. Lacking concrete ideas of his own, however, he begs his mother for advice. Promising to obey her blindly, he clearly yearns for a decision to be imposed upon him. He thus, like Aurispa, seeks an 'intercessore per la vita' (*Il trionfo della morte*, p. 657). Dario's mother urges him to marry; creating a family is an 'azione bella e grande quanto l'arte e la scienza' (p. 63). Dario again shirks action by asking her to choose his bride. His quest for a partner, then, is initially undertaken with the greatest reluctance.

Dario, however, rapidly glimpses the possibility of reconciling idealism and resignation. Just as Cantelmo hopes to engender 'viva poesia' (p. 411), Dario dreams of creating 'un'opera d'arte in azione' (p. 81) through fatherhood. He will redeem his intellectual impotence by generating 'colui che avrebbe creato il capolavoro d'arte a me negato di produrre, o rilevato alla società l'idea nuova e feconda che avrebbe allargato i confini dell'intelligenza, dominato le menti e creato l'avvenire'. Where, then, Cantelmo's ambition to father the 'Re di Roma' who destroys or inverts 'valori', forges 'nuove leggi per l'anima religiosa dei popoli' (p. 415), and builds an 'ideal ponte' (p. 417) towards the future, is matched by his desire to encapsulate his vision in 'una sola e

suprema opera d'arte' (p. 430), Dario seeks primarily to avenge artistic failure. As the older Dario remarks, frustrated ideals subvert his 'modestissimo atto di sottomissione' (p. 89).

His self-mockery, however, barely measures his youthful presumption. If Cantelmo himself approaches the superhuman ideal, Dario has been paralysed by a sense of physical and intellectual ineptitude. Yet we are now assured that, even after literary failure, he still aspires to become 'un uomo' (p. 80), that is, 'l'individuo della specie che ha raggiunto la maggiore eccellenza, che ha incarnato più largamente un certo ideale, una certa perfezione' (p. 81).[85] He judges his peers 'riprove sbagliate e corrette'. The narrator regrets: 'Non mi accorgevo che rappresentavo anch'io una prova sbagliata e delle peggiori.' This is quite at odds with the presentation of the adolescent Dario in Chapters 1-8.

We detect here the first evidence that Capuana parodies a D'Annunzian archetype. Reviewing *Le vergini delle rocce*, he professes astonishment that a man with Cantelmo's positivist grounding should embrace an irrational ideal. The incongruity of Dario's ambition mimics Cantelmo's absurd logic. We are reminded that earlier D'Annunzian protagonists pre-empt Cantelmo's *superomismo*. Encountering Nietzsche, Aurispa dreams of generating the *Übermensch*. Tullio Hermil, employing a vocabulary close to Dario's, longs to become 'una forma nobile della vita, un Uomo'.[86] Both, however, recognize their impotence and await an intercessor. Dario shares their sterility and yearning for intervention. The sudden shift from abulic mother's boy to aspirant superman ironically highlights the conceptual leap between the *Romanzi della rosa* and *Romanzi della melagrana*. Capuana hints that the evolution of the fragmented Aurispa into the self-willed Cantelmo is equally arbitrary.[87]

Dario nonetheless insists that he proceeds rationally in his attempts to father a *Wunderkind*. If the ambition is idealist, its execution will be positivistic. The 'uomo superiore' (p. 78) is he who recreates the world 'con la riflessione, penetrandone il

processo'. It is thus 'non i sensi, ma la riflessione' (p. 88) which drives him to dedicate his physical and intellectual forces to 'un fatto che la maggior parte degli uomini compie con colpevole spensieratezza'.

In this ambition, he initially appears to diverge radically from Cantelmo. If D'Annunzio's hero equally aspires to banish chance, he trusts not in reflection but in will. Where, for Dario, will is an exclusively intellectual energy, for Cantelmo, it is the 'arte di conferire agli indistinti moti della natura efficace lucidità e dignità di forze riconosciute e dirette' (p. 500). He speaks of 'tutte le volontà che io porto in me medesimo oscure o lucide' (p. 404). His self-discipline, he insists, 'non inaridiva le fonti spontanee della commozione e del sogno, anzi le eccitava a un'attività più alta' (p. 414).

As Dario likens himself to 'quei maghi maravigliosi operatori di prodigi, che, avendo asservito tutte le più arcane forze della natura, le costringono alla creazione da loro ideata e voluta' (p. 136), he evokes less D'Annunzio's creator of 'l'arte in vita' than the Promethean scientists who strive to perfect the species, portrayed in Capuana's short story collections *Il benefattore* (1901), *Il decameroncino* (1901), and *La voluttà di creare* (1911). In each of these tales, an experiment *in anima vili* misfires, and the scientist is punished for violating the laws of nature. Dario particularly recalls Manlio Brozzi, protagonist of 'L'incredibile esperimento'.

Brozzi seeks to liberate human nature from the rule of chance. Under his guidance, mankind will constrain brute elementary forces to operate 'non a loro capriccio, per caso, ma ragionevolmente' and will impose its own law 'riflessivamente'.[88] He thus pre-empts Dario's ambition to marshal 'mezzi e intenti forse non mai adoprati riflessivamente' (p. 81). Through a programme of artificial insemination, Brozzi aims to restore woman ('una creatura "preumana"'[89]) to her biological function of incubator. Living apart from his female flocks, man will gradually evolve into a more spiritual being. Brozzi thus employs electricity

to impregnate his own daughter. She dies in childbirth, however, and he is imprisoned for incest.

Despite the grotesque conclusion and the protagonist's punning name (Manly-o?),[90] however, a letter to De Roberto indicates that Capuana does not consider Brozzi's theories altogether absurd. Brozzi's conviction that, in promoting female independence, feminists are paradoxically emancipating men from sexual bondage is 'un concetto che mi sembra giusto'.[91] We might also recall Capuana's professed astonishment that Cantelmo should neglect the genetic research of Berthelet and seek to improve the species through 'modi diversi da quelli stabiliti dalla natura'. Capuana thus reveals an interest in the possibility of spiritual evolution and genetic engineering.
This implies that were Dario, unlike Cantelmo, to proceed scientifically, his ambition could not be dismissed *a priori*. If 'L'incredibile esperimento' suggests that nature will prevail, Dario's might at least be a heroic failure.[92]

Yet is Dario's plan pursued scientifically? He confesses to being initially paralysed by a 'paura dell'ignoto' (p. 81). For the adolescent Dario, the 'ignoto' is quintessentially woman. Hegel and the positivists, as his older self this time perceives, *combine* to convince him that she is merely an 'intermedio fra gli antropoidi e l'uomo' (p. 78). Capable of sensation, imagination, and sentiment but narrow and egoistic, she debases the spiritual male. She is thus 'la gran nemica, l'avversaria' (pp. 77-78).

For Pullini, Capuana fully shares Dario's conception of woman as instrument of matter.[93] We have seen, however, that in *Profumo* and *La sfinge* Capuana lucidly shows how both positivist and idealist sexual iconographies divorce mind from body and the male subject from the feminine and instinctive. Dario's misogyny should thus be seen as a symptom of the generational malaise that Capuana portrays in *Rassegnazione*.

It is, of course, a *fine secolo* topos. One thinks of Robert Greslou's scorn 'pour l'inintelligence de la "Dame"' in *Le disciple* (1889), of

Neera's *Senio* (1891) where the protagonist views woman as a parasite 'che vive a nostre spese e succhia il nostro cervello', or Butti's *L'incantesimo* (1897) where Aurelio Imberido considers her 'questo essere inferiore e ammaliante', is a 'terribile nemico della personalità'.[94] Again, however, Dario most conspicuously echoes Giorgio Aurispa who attributes 'l'impoverimento del suo vigore' (p. 940) to 'l'opera distruttrice della Nemica'. One might also recall Andrea Sperelli's description of Elena as 'l'idolo' who undermines 'tutte le volontà del cuore' and 'tutte le forze dell'intelletto' or Giovanni Episcopo's dread of 'la bestia, la femmina'.[95] In his fear of woman, Dario again resembles the early D'Annunzio's *malati della volontà.*

Cantelmo, conversely, delights in moving 'con una vaga antiveggenza verso l'Ignota e l'Infinito viventi' (pp. 398-99). He who places 'tutta la dignità dell'essere nell'esercitare o nel patire una forza morale' approaches both man and woman 'con l'ansia segreta di dominare o d'esser dominato' (p. 398). Cantelmo conquers his fear of chance and the unknown through the exaltation of instinct. As the abulic, woman-fearing Dario seeks to emulate Cantelmo, Capuana again highlights the conceptual leap between the *Romanzi della rosa* and the *Romanzi della melagrana.*

Dario finally overcomes his fear of the feminine 'ignoto' by recalling the idealized heroines of his readings. He resolves to seek their real-life counterparts: 'Con queste qui oh! non amerai solo: sarai riamato!... Tra le mille ce n'e una [...] che sarà tua, che ti vorrà suo!' (p. 84). Embracing a literary ideal of romantic love, Dario thus already undermines his rigorously scientific programme.

We must not be deceived by Dario's rhetoric into thinking that he embarks upon an exhaustive and objective search for a mate. He insists that 'mi apprestavo alla eccelsa funzione come a un atto supremo' (p. 88). Dedicating all his physical and intellectual powers to the task, he is among the few who have approached man's loftiest act 'con degna preparazione, con intera e limpida coscienza' (p. 88). Yet, while complaining of 'la stanchezza delle

inutili ricerche' (p. 90), he gives no details of his procedure. He mentions solely that, after years of seclusion, 'ero stato presentato in varie famiglie, frequentavo riunioni, feste, teatri' (p. 91). He appears, then, merely to frequent provincial society.

Learning of Dario's quest, his friend Lenzi frivolously proposes his seventeen-year-old sister Fausta. It is wisest, he argues, to marry a stranger as love-matches never last. Initially judging Lenzi's proposal 'sconveniente' (p. 92), Dario soon reflects that any bride would be an 'incognita' (p. 95). Having encountered no-one who meets his criteria, he may as well trust in chance. This, of course, contradicts both his scientific programme and the romantic search for a soul-mate with which it has become confused. Dario tellingly confesses that he felt 'quasi liberato dal grave imbarazzo delle ricerche e della scelta' (p. 96). Again, then, he is grateful for an 'intercessore'. Here Capuana may again parody *Le vergini delle rocce*. In his review of the novel, he notes that Cantelmo, despite his lofty programme, effectively seeks a bride amongst neurotic neighbours. A parallel may thus be drawn between the objectively desultory efforts of both Dario and Cantelmo.

Visiting Lenzi, Dario is nonetheless captivated by Fausta's portrait. His scientific programme is again undermined as he falls, idealistically, for an artistic image. Showing the portrait to his mother, he requests her approval. Startled, she opines that he cannot have made 'una scelta irriflessiva' (p. 102). Assuring her that he has not, the narrator recalls, 'mi rimordeva il cuore di ingannarla in parte'. This is an unambiguous confession that he has not proceeded 'con la riflessione'.

we remain unsure, however, how fully the mature Dario perceives his youthful inconsistencies. On one hand, he continues to insist that his search was logically rigorous. On the other, he confesses to gratitude over Lenzi's intervention and to acting impulsively. An element of narratorial *mauvaise foi* again warns us against reading *Rassegnazione* as a linear *Bildungsroman*.

It is only *after* his engagement that Dario verifies his choice scientifically by seeking medical confirmation of the couple's suitability for reproduction. It is here that Dario's fusion of idealism and positivism produces its most comically incongruous results. Yet, unlike his irreverent doctor, the narrator appears blind to the disparity between superhuman ideals and a humiliating examination in which he is urged to exercise his sexual organs 'perchè non si atrofizzino' (p. 113).

Assured that Fausta is ideally constituted for maternity, the young Dario proudly notes that she exerts an exclusively aesthetic attraction upon him. His contemporaries exaggerate the snares that nature sets to conserve the species. Obeying its laws 'riflessivamente', he need not fear sensual temptation and emotional involvement. Here he may again remind us of Neera's Senio, Butti's Aurelio Imberido, and Bourget's Robert Greslou, each of whom positivistically abjure love.[96] As chastisement for hubris, each is eventually ensnared. Dario, however, may not precisely share their fate. His rationalist programme is already undermined by an incongruous dream of romantic love and the discovery of 'la modesta e schietta promessa della intima felicità che andavo cercando' (p. 98) in Fausta's portrait.

Indeed, we find that Dario again rapidly abandons scientific rigour. Marriage leads him to a mystical exaltation of the will. He considers himself the embodiment of 'la Volontà, la Forza maschile, l'Elemento fecondatore e creatore' (p. 125) and envisages procreation as 'il più solenne atto religioso della mia vita' (p. 124).[97] Appalled at Fausta's indifference to her child's gender, Dario exhorts her to *will* a son as 'la volontà influisce' (p. 131).

It is this unambiguously comical episode (Chapters 13-14) which most conspicuously parodies *Le vergini delle rocce*. Dario's youthful rhetoric clearly satirizes that of Cantelmo. The 'Re di Roma' becomes Dario's 'principino imperiale' (p. 141). Cantelmo's 'Colui che deve venire' (p. 398, 500, 526, 542) becomes Dario's 'Colui che avrebbe dovuto attuare quel che al suo genitore era

stato negato' (p. 143). Dario immerses himself in poetry, investing natural phenomena with occult meaning and awaiting 'un portento' (p. 136). Following the consummation of their union, he leads Fausta (with 'superstiziosa premura' (p. 125)) to receive 'la benedizione dei primi raggi del sole' (p. 126).

The narrator now finally takes his distance from his younger self, regretting his failure to perceive the contradiction between paganistic fervour and positivist convictions. Retrospectively, he is both amused by 'tutte queste fantasticherie' (p. 126) and horrified by 'la deformazione del mio spirito' (p. 127) which leads him to emit an 'urlo bestiale' (p. 147) when Fausta predictably gives birth to a daughter.

Despite his self-criticism, however, the narrating Dario does not draw the correct lesson from this episode. He portrays his failure as proof that nature must thwart human will. We perceive that, on the contrary, he gives a further proof of abulia. Embarking upon a positivistic experiment, he is led by fear of the unknown to seek an intercessor. Only *a posteriori* does he put his choice of bride to a cursory scientific test. The narrator, however, insists that his programme is rigorously pursued. Exaltation of the will is, in his account, simply a superstitious attempt to secure the success of a positivistically conducted project. Clearly, though, he has long abandoned scientific rationalism. Having demonstrated his lack of moral and intellectual energy, he cultivates will *precisely* where it must prove impotent. The narrator either fails or prefers not to see that where will was needed, he has proved inert. He is thus able to move towards a concept of 'resignation' which flatters his passivity.

In the chapters of *Rassegnazione* which most closely parallel *Le vergini delle rocce*, Capuana underlines the gratuitous evolution of the protagonists of *I romanzi della rosa* into the self-willed Cantelmo. Like the former, Dario is rendered abulic by an abuse of positivist analysis (exacerbated, in Capuana's diagnosis, by vestigial Hegelian idealism). He seeks to abandon emasculating 'riflessione' for Cantelmo's exaltation of the will. This

*superomismo* is revealed, however, as dehumanizing wishful thinking. The will is exposed to an inevitable but flattering defeat which, ultimately, merely reinforces abulia. Chapters 9-14 do not, then, target a monolithic *dannunzianesimo*. Capuana debunks D'Annunzio's proposals for transcending spiritual crisis in *Le vergini delle rocce*, but accepts much of his earlier analysis of generational malaise. *Rassegnazione* is the critique of an evolving ideology and poetics.

c) *Chapters 15-21: 'Rassegnazione' and 'L'innocente'*

If critics have detected echoes of *Le vergini dell rocce* in *Rassegnazione*, equally significant analogies with *L'innocente* in Chapters 15-21 remain almost unobserved.[98] Yet the twin references to Dario's daughter as 'la innocente creaturina' (p. 147) in the final paragraph of Chapter 14 should alert us to a vital *clef de lecture*.

The third section of *Rassegnazione* most conspicuously evokes *L'innocente* in two areas. Firstly, both Dario and Hermil provoke the death of a child whose existence they consider an affront to their will. Secondly, both are instructed to abjure sexual contact with their partner lest a future pregnancy prove fatal. Thus, in each novel, scenes of apparent marital reconciliation (each occurring during a visit to the couple's honeymoon villa) conceal a suicide attempt on the wife's part.

These twin analogies serve two purposes. They indicate firstly that, Dario's behavioural patterns remain those of the *Romanzi della rosa*, and, secondly, that *Rassegnazione* should be read not as didactic *Bildungsroman* but as reluctant confession. We shall increasingly detect *mauvaise foi* in the older Dario's commentary as he seeks to present a dehumanizing idealism as the rebirth of his humanity.

The narrating Dario is initially keen to stress critical distance from his younger self. Charting his estrangement from Fausta and loathing for his child, he describes himself as neither 'un bruto' (p.

161) nor 'un selvaggio' but 'interiormente, qualcosa di peggio'. He is appalled to recollect that he would readily have committed 'il sacrilegio, il delitto' (p. 162) of consigning Fausta to death in child-birth, had he been assured that a male child would survive. His ideal 'valeva bene la vita di una creatura'. He now perceives that Fausta was right to accuse him of having deformed 'la propria intelligenza, il proprio cuore' (p. 165) and rendered them 'inumani'. At the time, however, this had merely reinforced 'il mio convincimento delle inferiorità dell'intelligenza femminile' (p. 171).

The older Dario thus appears to recognize that he has relinquished his humanity in pursuit of an ideal. The combined influence of positivism and Hegelianism leads him to view Fausta as a mere imperfect instrument. Yet he is reluctant to acknowledge that he has conspired in his child's death. Where Hermil acts consciously, Dario appears imperfectly aware of his guilt.

Fausta warns him that the child is sickly and urges him to hire a nurse, lest she poison it with her 'latte guasto' (p. 164). Dario, however, persistently refuses to act, and the child duly dies. Although horrified to recall the sense of liberation which he felt at its death, the narrator nowhere accepts responsibility for hastening its end. We must thus approach Dario's account of what he terms the rebirth of his humanity with scepticism. We find that, in his reconciliation with Fausta he again resembles Tullio Hermil.

Dario regains interest in his wife just as she loses her child and all hope of reconquering her husband. She thus attracts him in the double form of abandoned woman and *mater dolorata*. We recall Hermil's insistence that Giuliana must suffer to achieve heroism.[99] While the narrating Dario stresses the 'humanity' of his new emotion, we perceive that he merely exchanges one decadent female icon, Aurispa's 'la Nemica', for another, Hermil's 'martyr'. We recollect too that Dario only conquers his indifference to his mother solely when revelations of marital mistreatment present

her as 'una martire' (p. 46), 'una santa' (p. 64). Likewise, the literary heroines who permit him to overcome his aversion to women are predominantly sacrificial victims. Dario's sexual ideology thus remains dualistic. He abandons a concept, sanctioned by both positivism and Hegelianism, of woman as brute instrument of nature, only to recast her as martyred image of the spirit.

The narrator's failure to perceive his continued thralldom to decadent ideology dictates inconsistencies in his account of Fausta's second pregnancy and death. We are told that a penitent Dario now cannot countenance endangering Fausta's life through potentially lethal sexual contact. Fausta, unaware of her condition, berates him for his indifference. Informed of the danger, she declares herself ready to die to realize Dario's dream of fathering a superman. Dario, however, characteristically wavers until his mother persuades him to seek a second medical opinion. Confirming the original diagnosis, the doctor suggests that the couple practise birth-control. In Fausta, nature has granted Dario 'una delle più belle, fresche e sontuose coppe di amore' (p. 204). Scandalized, Dario considers Fausta's offer of self-immolation immensely preferable to such 'pretesa scienza positiva' (p. 205).

Returning home, Dario glimpses Fausta picking flowers and finds her 'trasformata' (p. 207). Although stirred, he initially checks his passions. Indignation may briefly have tempted him to accept Fausta's self-sacrifice but now the thought appears an 'enormità' (p. 210). He is convinced that a second pregnancy would prove fatal: 'a che scopo avrei immolato quella giovinezza, giacchè (non potevo più dubitarne) l'immolazione era sicura?' (p. 211). Nevertheless, watching Fausta, he is overcome by 'stupore' (p. 212) and rushes to embrace her, reflecting that 'sarebbe una grande infamia della Natura se le tristi previsioni del dottore dovessero avverarsi' (p. 213). Fausta responds 'sollevando fieramente la fronte in atto di sfida al destino', and, just then, Dario writes, 'mi sentii forte anch'io contro di esso, e quasi mi parve di aver vinto!'. Yet, moments before, he had believed Fausta's death inevitable.

In Dario's account, then, two factors lead him to impregnate Fausta 'mio malgrado' (p. 205), both adduced as proof of renewed humanity. Firstly, he rebels against an arrogant positivist science guilty of 'deforming' his intelligence. This revolt is strengthened by 'la invincibile repugnanza di ridurre mia moglie a coppa di piacere'. Secondly, he surrenders to 'l'irrompente rigoglio della virilità'. We are asked to celebrate the resurrection of Dario's humanist ethics and human passion rather than observe that a moment's lust condemns Fausta to death. A closer examination of Dario's impulse of 'virility' reveals, however, the persistence of a decadent sexual ideology and shows that he spurns an anti-natural positivism for an equally dehumanizing idealism.

Dario experiences his first erotic urge precisely once persuaded that a further pregnancy would prove fatal. It is in the light of the definitive second consultation that Fausta appears 'trasformata'. Gathering flowers in the garden, she of course evokes Proserpine, personification of spring yet queen of the Underworld. Dario shares, then, Hermil's decadent association of sex and death. We note that he is stirred by 'la sua delicata bellezza' (p. 207). Yet he had previously extolled her vigorous health and child-bearing physique, glad that her beauty would never inspire 'furori di passione morbosa' (p. 116). Weakened by an arduous birth, cast down by Dario's indifference, and now under threat of death, Fausta inspires a passion which can *only* appear morbid. Like Hermil, Dario is driven to 'martyr' Fausta; his access of 'virilità' is a desecration.

Throughout Fausta's pregnancy, Dario significantly fears that he has committed a crime. Where Fausta embraces his dream of fathering a superman, referring to her child as 'il Sospirato, l'Atteso' (p. 215), Dario sees her merely as 'una vittima coronata di fiori' (p. 217). When she dies in child-birth, he claims to experience a remorse which has poisoned his existence. Yet, while loudly proclaiming his guilt and contrition, the narrating Dario strives, in fact, to minimize his responsibility for Fausta's death.

Dario situates his guilt in two areas. Firstly, he now believes that Fausta consciously sought death through despair at not being able to realize his ideal of engendering a superman and accuses himself of contributing 'per debolezza, a quel delitto' (p. 218). He should have resisted 'ogni lusinga', 'ogni illusione' (pp. 218-19), for Fausta had only pretended to doubt the doctor's diagnosis in order to draw Dario into the 'inganno' (p. 219) which would permit her suicide. Yet we must query the extent of her deception. She had, after all, pleaded that Dario accept her self-immolation, crying, 'Prendi la mia vita!' (p. 205). We cannot accept, then, that Dario was ignorant of her death-wish.

We must also balk when Dario insists that, despite his remorse, he blesses his wife's 'inganno'. It has, he explains, prevented him from rendering Fausta an instrument of pleasure and thereby inflicting 'il supremo oltraggio' (p. 220) upon her. The 'unità della mia intelligenza e dei miei atti' thus remains unviolated. Yet, as we have seen, Dario's 'intelligenza' tells him that sexual contact is potentially lethal.

Secondly, Dario locates his guilt 'nel superbo intento di voler mettere la ragione nelle piccole irragionevolezze della Natura' (p. 219). Yet he has not previously sought to reconcile Fausta's second pregnancy with his desire to manipulate nature 'con la riflessione'. On the contrary, he had made a 'human' challenge to both positive science and 'destiny'. We thus cannot accept that Fausta's death represents the thwarting of a superhuman ideal.

Most strikingly, however, the two elements of Dario's guilt are mutually exclusive The impregnation of Fausta cannot simultaneously be an act of 'debolezza' and a proud 'sfida al destino' (p. 213). We can only detect *mauvaise foi* in Dario's self-contradictory *mea culpa*. He strives to evade the conclusion that morbid erotic passion provokes his wife's death and to interpret Fausta's suicide in a manner flattering to his self-image as thwarted idealist.

The strongest evidence of Dario's unquiet conscience, however, is the confession that, only in the process of writing, does he finally interpret Fausta's death as self-punishing suicide. If his life has genuinely been poisoned by remorse, how has he previously perceived it? The reader must surely wonder why Fausta, who has earlier deemed Dario's programme a pipe-dream and chastised him for considering her a mere instrument, dies parroting his Cantelmo-like rhetoric. If she is convinced that child-birth will be fatal, we might detect a satirical intent, on Fausta's part, as she mimics Dario's longing for 'il Sospirato, l'Atteso' (p. 215). We might, in fact, suspect that Fausta conspires in her own death as a form of vengeance.[100] While seeking to minimize his guilt, the narrator inadvertently reveals his active role in Fausta's demise. His self-contradictions suggest that, in reality, he has long been at least dimly aware of his guilt and sees an accusation in Fausta's dying acts and words.

Where Hermil unconvincingly maintains that remorse motivates his autobiography, Dario claims to write from a tranquilly 'resigned' perspective. Chapters 15-21 suggest, however, that his conscience is troubled by crimes as great as Hermil's. Both shun a concept of woman as embodiment of nature only to embrace an equally dualistic image of woman as a purely spiritual being martyred to male sexuality. We detect both *mauvaise foi* and masochistic pleasure as Dario strives to minimize his active role in Fausta's death, publicly wallowing in only such guilt and self-pity as he chooses to reveal. It is perhaps in this that he most resembles Hermil.

d) *Chapters 21-22: 'Rassegnazione' and 'Il piacere'*

Fausta's death merely provides the young Dario with another opportunity to view himself as a thwarted idealist. He concludes that a hostile 'Natura' has dashed his efforts to circumscribe its power. Capriciously, it has granted him the 'intelligenza' (p. 227) and 'forte volontà' required to realize the 'scopo intellettuale' (p. 228) which alone might render him 'degno del nome del uomo', yet refused him the equally vital creative imagination. He retains,

then, faith in his exalted will and fails to attribute his failure to abulia.

In this analysis, of course, Fausta remains the means to an ideal end. Again, the narrating Dario underwrites his youthful interpretation of her death. Chapters 21-22 suggest, however, that the young Dario experiences an unconfessed sense of guilt which both he and the narrating Dario conceal beneath the flattering self-image of a thwarted idealist.

Incapable of resigning himself to mediocrity, Dario contemplates killing himself. Wishing to spare his ailing mother, he opts, however, for moral suicide. He indulges in systematic debauchery as an affront to the 'Destino' (p. 230) which nurtures unrealizable ideals. He will make himself 'un bruto' to demonstrate that his will is stronger than destiny. Leaving for Milan on the pretext of collaborating on his friend Lostini's literary journal, he again poses as champion of the will.

The D'Annunzian archetype for this brief episode is self-evident. It is sufficient to note that the word 'piacere' occurs sixteen times in its nineteen pages. As the narrator now perceives, far from abdicating his former self, Dario transfers his idealism to a baser sphere. Chasing 'il piacere supremo' (pp. 244-45), Dario mimics Andrea Sperelli's pursuit of the 'oltrapiacente'.[101] His mentor in debauchery, Grigoni, teaches that pleasure is 'qualcosa di amorfo' (p. 240) moulded by imagination. Dario again glimpses the possibility of creating a living work of art and takes his mistress, Savina, as raw material for 'una creazione vissuta, in azione'.[102]

The humble, affectionate Savina is, however, quite unsuited to his 'opera di raffinamento' (p. 241) and frustrates him with 'pudori' and involuntary 'atteggiamenti di rimprovero'. In one moment of resistance, she suddenly reminds him of Fausta. Unlike Sperelli, however, who delights in superimposing Elena's image onto Maria's body, or Grigoni, who terms 'il rinascere dei ricordi' (p. 243) a form of 'godimento', Dario is horrified of profaning his past and promptly dismisses Savina. As he flees reminders of

Fausta, the younger Dario appears to evade an unconfessed sense of guilt. Associating Fausta with 'atteggiamenti di rimprovero', he tacitly acknowledges a sense of responsibility for her death.

He nonetheless makes one further attempt to achieve the 'oltrapiacente'. His pleasure in stealing the glacial Gilda from a moribund aristocrat recalls Sperelli's delight in winning Ippolita Albónico from Giannetto Rùtolo in Book 1, Chapter 5 of *Il piacere*. Dario now situates supreme pleasure in melting Gilda's frigidity. He seeks to dominate her with artifice and adopts Sperelli's motto of 'habere, non haberi'.[103] Yet as he strives ever harder to 'animate' Gilda, he forgets Grigoni's warning that pleasure resides in the imagination. He is barely rescued from falling in love by the concerted intervention of Lostini and Bissi.

Ultimately, it is not Sperelli that Dario most resembles but, once again, Giorgio Aurispa. Aurispa aims to create an artificial, sensual world but cannot, finally, countenance the thought that his lover is an inanimate puppet. Aspiring to sensual *superomismo*, Dario again evokes the most inept and abulic of D'Annunzio's heroes.

As we have seen, the older Dario acknowledges that idealism thwarts an attempt to commit moral suicide. He again errs, however, in presenting the episode as primarily a defeat of the will. Significantly, Dario seeks to exercise his will precisely where Sperelli abdicates his own. If Dario plans 'una vita novella' (p. 240) of pleasure, Sperelli's thwarted 'vita nuova' is the pursuit of art. It is Aurispa, conversely, who vainly demands a 'vita nuova' from the senses. As in the Cantelmo-inspired episode, Dario exalts the will in a sphere where it is powerless. We shall see later that he might more usefully have exercised it by collaborating on Lostini's journal.[104]

In chapters 21-22, Capuana again contrasts the protagonists of the *Romanzi della rosa* with the later D'Annunzio's *superuomo*. In Sperelli and Aurispa, he implies, D'Annunzio has already illustrated the futility of the union of will and senses pursued by

Cantelmo and Éffrena. Dario's sensual *superomismo* is further undermined by an unconfessed sense of guilt over Fausta's death.

e) *Chapters 22-27: Resignation?*

The final chapters of *Rassegnazione* evoke no specific D'Annunzian archetype. Dario nonetheless continues to echo Cantelmo and Éffrena in his aspiration towards a living work of art while remaining undermined by the abulia of D'Annunzio's earlier protagonists.

The concluding episode begins with the first anniversary of Fausta's death which again sees Dario fail to acknowledge his guilt towards her. The young Dario is initially perplexed by his 'inaspettata aridità di cuore' (p. 255). Nothing evokes Fausta's presence; it is 'come se ella sdegnasse di ripresentarsi alla mia mente' (p. 254). He links this posthumous rebuke, however, not to his role in Fausta's death but to his infidelity in Milan. Far from recognizing his guilt, he presents her ghostly jealousy as unreasonable. Her rooms appear mute with 'orgoglio' (p. 255) and 'dispetto'.

Dario's indifference melts only at Fausta's tomb. Her tranquil resting-place inspires a 'tormentoso senso di invidia' (p. 256). This soon gives way, however, to 'un sentimento di compassione di me stesso' which revives the affection that Dario had felt in the last months of Fausta's life. His love for Fausta again appears a compound of self-pity and morbidity.

Dario becomes convinced that Fausta is inviting him to suicide. The narrating Dario acknowledges that the suicidal urge is narcissistic and a further manifestation of his idealism. He does not perceive, however, that, having sought an intercessor for life, he now demands an intercessor for death. Here he once again evokes the abulic Giorgio Aurispa. Just as Aurispa, planning to imitate his uncle's suicide, invokes his shade,[105] Dario begs Fausta's spirit to give him 'la forza di venir volontariamente a raggiungerti' (p. 259). Both Dario and Aurispa shut themselves in

the deceased's chamber, hoping, in vain, that suggestion will strengthen their resolve.

To spare his mother, however, Dario finally decides to commit suicide in his country-villa. Yet, once there, he delays further. The narrator attributes his hesitations to the industry and resignation of the local priest and doctor which expose his 'superbia delusa' (p. 274). Perhaps, however, his will simply lacks an intercessor's spur. He declares that had he brought Fausta's portrait along, he would have killed himself forthwith 'quasi per precipitarmi tra le braccia in attesa' (p. 272). Thus, when Dario risks his life to save a peasant-child from fire, we suspect that he is, in fact, seeking a death which does not implicate his will. Recovering consciousness, his first words are 'Peccato! Sarebbe stata finita!' (p. 289).

The child Rosa is orphaned in the blaze, and Dario resolves to adopt her and to remould her in Fausta's image. This ambiguous episode is pivotal to any understanding of Dario's resignation. For a majority of critics, the adoption is a successful attempt to imitate the resigned charity of the humble priest and doctor. Tonelli, for example, identifies 'definitiva rassegnazione' with 'bontà attiva', arguing that Dario's is not 'rassegnazione fatalistica ma rassegnazione cristiana'.[106] Other critics, conversely, equate Dario's resignation with fatalism.[107] Each group, however, shares the conviction that Capuana marshals Dario to an authorially sanctioned conclusion.

References to the novel-in-progress in Capuana's correspondence certainly suggest that Dario was originally to achieve a full understanding of the concept of resignation. In 1895, he describes the freshly conceived *Rassegnazione* to De Roberto as the tale of a man whose ideals are thwarted by 'il suo debole organismo' and 'la natura del suo ingegno'.[108] Finally, however, the protagonist 'arriva a rassegnarsi, riconoscendo che anche gli umili e i mediocri hanno il loro valore'.[109] In 1900, upon the serial publication of the first eleven chapters, Capuana again points De Roberto to his 'concetto elevato, filosofico e sociale'. The ideal of resignation will

not be 'predicato' but will emerge from Dario's account of 'le sue aspirazioni, le sue illusioni, le sue delusioni, la sua rassegnazione'.

In 1907, however, in his preface to the completed novel, Capuana merely hopes that 'qualcuno degli illusi, come il mio Dario, ne ricevesse conforto e insegnamento a non chiedere alla vita più di quel che essa può dare' (p. [ii]). This does not signify that Dario himself attains resignation; he may remain one of the 'illusi'. The novel carries a lesson but it is not necessarily one learned by its narrator.

Only Pullini takes up the suggestion that Dario's resignation may not be complete. In his analysis, it contains 'un piccolo rifugio di compiaciuto narcisismo' where 'l'ideale rimane come "godimento ineffabile" proprio perché irraggiungibile'.[110] This is certainly what one might expect of the abulic, self-pitying protagonist that we have thus far observed. For Pullini, critical distance between narrator and younger self vanishes at the novel's conclusion. For both, resignation is neither tragic renunciation, self-affirmation nor a playful judgment on the past, but a 'dilemna aperto, interrogativo'.[111]

We have seen, of course, that the narrator *persistently* fails to achieve critical distance, and that his account is vitiated by *mauvaise foi* and imperfect self-knowledge throughout. Pullini is nonetheless right to present *Rassegnazione* not as a *Bildungsroman* but as an open-ended inquiry into the nature of resignation.

From the outset, the adoption of Rosa invites scepticism. Dario believes that he is imitating the active charity of the priest, *don* Luca. He flouts, however, two of the priest's firmest beliefs. Firstly, *don* Luca argues that charity without faith is impossible: 'Coloro che dicono di fare il bene unicamente pel bene, se non mentiscono, sono illusi dalla loro vanità' (p. 282). Yet Dario is a confirmed atheist. Secondly, *don* Luca maintains that social-climbing produces misery and that happiness consists in humble acceptance of one's lot. Yet Dario plans to make Rosa a *signorina*.

We remain equally unpersuaded by Dario's impression of having shed his ideals and become 'un altro' (p. 298). He experiences a similar sense of rebirth after renouncing his literary ideals, when his mother preaches a doctrine of resignation strikingly similar to that of *don* Luca, and, again, upon his arrival in Milan.

We soon observe that Dario's concept of resignation remains defeatist. He laments 'l'aridità del presente e l'inanità del futuro' and complains that his life is reduced to 'un'opera di carità'. Rather than active charity, we observe his habitual fusion of corrosive positivist analysis and idealism. The former leads him to fear that he can never erase the imprint of Rosa's former environment, the latter to subvert his program of adoption. As Rosa owes him her life, Dario begins to consider her his creature. Deciding to refashion her in Fausta's image, in an 'atto di espiazione' (p. 303) for his wife's memory,[112] he again envisages Rosa as a 'creazione vissuta, in azione'. His educational program thus recalls the futile 'opera di raffinamento' attempted on Savina.

As the young Dario dedicates himself to his 'nuova creazione' (p. 306), charting the awakening of Rosa's 'organismo' and observing her 'spirito in formazione', he again imitates the rhetoric of Cantelmo and Éffrena ('dovevo esser io il dominatore, il creatore' (p. 305)). Equally strongly however, he recalls the creative thrill experienced by Giorgio Aurispa as he moulds Ippolita.

Aurispa concludes that Ippolita passively adopts gestures and attitudes while remaining intrinsically unaltered. Although Dario's experiment is incomplete at the novel's conclusion, he is tormented by the same doubts which lead Aurispa to destroy himself and his 'creation'. Capuana hints that, in Aurispa, D'Annunzio has already signalled what we should make of his demiurgic successors. The conceptual leap made between the *Romanzi della rosa* and D'Annunzio's later novels is again underlined.[113]

The young Dario views the adoption of Rosa less as an exercise in Christian resignation than as a further challenge to the will. Learning that he is too young to adopt her formally, he declares that he recognizes no obstacle existing outwith his will. His lawyer retorts that 'la volontà non comanda, obbedisce' (p. 302); passions, caprice, and circumstances hold sway. He thus implies that the would-be *superuomo* Dario again seeks to assert his will precisely where it must be impotent.

Yet the young Dario seems quite aware of this. He confesses to his mother his need for 'un sogno nella vita, un'illusione' (p. 304) at the risk of rueing its 'fallace malìa'. If he glimpses *a priori* the illusory nature of his program, he appears actively to pursue glorious failure. We thus cannot accept the narrator's subsequent claim that he did not perceive that his charitable project was subverted by idealism. Only now, he writes, does he appreciate that a failure to measure and to exploit 'il preciso valore delle sue facoltà' (p. 305) prevented him from achieving active Christian resignation. On the contrary, his younger self lucidly views Rosa as raw material for his artistic will and anticipates resistance.

Dario nonetheless wonders whether he judges himself too harshly. Perhaps all nature's mediocrities, 'mezzi-artisti', 'mezzi-scienziati', 'mezzi-uomini politici' (p. 306), are aborted attempts to achieve the perfect form. Perhaps his apparently futile life might serve 'qualche inesplicabile funzione [...] nel vasto organismo della società' (p. 310) and be justified 'davanti alla riflessione' (p. 306). It is, he claims, in an effort to uncover his 'funzione' that he embarks upon his memoirs.[114]

Dario's autobiographical urge remains largely unexamined. Critics have generally supposed that his intentions are cheerfully hortative, and that, like Capuana in the authorially signed preface, he intends to offer 'conforto e insegnamento' to those yet to achieve resignation. Nowhere, however, is this implied in Dario's text, which begins, without preamble, at Dario's first salient memory. Only towards the conclusion does he explicitly motivate his autobiography, presenting it as an open-ended inquiry. The

*mauvaise foi* and self-deception that we have charted, however, must cast doubt on his aspirations to self-understanding. The novel's concluding scene confirms that his authentic motivation is neither altruistic nor self-analytical.

In this, Dario explains to his novelist-friend Bissi that his memoirs expose 'anche per gli altri, i miseri avvenimenti che hanno fatto di me un impotente della vita' (p. 314). This would imply that his aim is indeed didactic, but that he proposes himself as a *negative* role model. We note, however, that he blames not personal failings but 'avvenimenti'. He goes on to claim that writing has alerted him to 'l'alto mio grido contro la fatalità della Sorte'. His autobiography will be 'la mia più compiuta giustificazione'. As we have seen, he thus presents himself as a self-willed idealist thwarted by hostile Nature. A few pages earlier, he asserts that 'perseguire un ideale e non raggiungerlo mai, è godimento ineffabile' (p. 306) and that 'fin la sofferenza può mutarsi in godimento, ripensandola'. Dario's memoirs nurture his self-pity, afford him masochistic pleasure, and justify his inertia.

Yet this act of self-justification may not constitute the end of Dario's itinerary. The conversation with Bissi takes place shortly before the completion of his memoirs. Having brought them up to date, he explains to his friend, he will write no more as his present life is 'vegetazione quasi ingombrante' (p. 314). His autobiography will justify him 'caso mai'. The 'caso mai' alludes to intimations of death. Dario is disillusioned with Rosa/Fausta, suspecting that he has merely uprooted her from her natural environment and taught her unreasonable ambitions and passions. He fears that he will die before learning the outcome of his experiment and his life conclude 'con un desolatissimo punto interrogativo' (p. 316). As the conversation ends, the cry of an owl makes Dario murmur 'Per chi crede ai presagi... !'.

Too little attention has been devoted to Dario's premonitions of death. The tone of these concluding pages suggests an elderly narrator recalling youthful misdemeanours. Yet, when Dario tells

Bissi that he has almost completed his memoirs, he can barely have reached early middle-age. We might suspect that he is again striking a tragic pose. We should, however, ask how the narrative reaches our hands, for Dario asks Bissi to publish it only after his death. We may conclude that Dario lacks the will to commit suicide. The implication, nonetheless, is that he meets an early end. If, as Dario assures Bissi, he is 'rassegnato' (p. 314) after witnessing the dissipation of 'tanto slancio di volontà' (p. 316), his is not the active Christian resignation of *don* Luca but a renunciation of the will to life.

In this light, how, ultimately, must we interpret the novel's allusions to D'Annunzio's fiction? The adolescent Dario shares with the protagonists of the *Romanzi della rosa* corrosive powers of positivist analysis. Coupled with exacerbated idealism, these erode his will and persuade him of his impotence. To escape this moral *impasse*, he embraces the *superomismo* of Cantelmo and Éffrena which offers the illusion of exercising the will in spheres where it must, nonetheless, prove impotent. Behind his rhetoric, we perceive that Dario proves persistently abulic wherever the will might usefully be engaged. The inevitable (and ultimately foreseen) failure of his ideals persuades Dario that a hostile 'Natura' thwarts all human endeavour, permitting him to confer the dignity of resignation upon his inertia.

Capuana turns D'Annunzio's weapons against him by waving a copy of *Il trionfo della morte* at the author of *Le vergini delle rocce*. Cantelmo's exaltation of the will thus appears a gratuitous attempt to escape an ideological dead-end. Does this mean, though, that Capuana belatedly accepts the younger D'Annunzio's contention that contemporary man is undermined by abulia and destructive self-analysis? A study of two neglected secondary characters will suggest, conversely, that Dario's paralysis is self-serving, and that the later D'Annunzio's ideal of 'arte in vita' is not altogether dismissed.

*Rassegnazione* is intended to provide 'conforto e insegnamento'. These cannot come from Dario who attains the fatalistic

'rassegnazione mussulmana' condemned in 'Il benefattore' and transcended in *Profumo*.[115] They emerge, rather, from an implied contrast between Dario's itinerary and the careers of his childhood friends Bissi and Lostini. These two ideological doubles provide an implicit critical commentary on Dario's life. We shall find that each embodies a concept of resignation at odds with Dario's fatalism.

f) *Ideological doubles in 'Rassegnazione'*

Bissi, Lostini, and Dario are first united by literary ambition. They are initially joined by Lenzi who disappears from the narrative after introducing Dario to his sister Fausta.[116] Each of Dario's three friends has a different concept of literature. For the aspiring politician, Lenzi, it is a useful accomplishment. For the self-publicist, Lostini, it is an extension of journalism. Bissi, however, aspires solely to participate in an imminent 'gran movimento di rinnovazione artistica' (p. 23). Should he fail to achieve artistic prominence, he will, he declares, take his life.

The adolescent Dario is over-awed by both Lenzi and Bissi, judging them 'organismi perfetti' (p. 25), whose every act is directed towards an assured 'vittoria'. Initially astounded by their acumen and eloquence, he gradually perceives that they articulate his own thoughts. Both Lenzi and Bissi intercede to reveal Dario to himself. Encouraged, Dario participates more actively in their discussions, impressing them with his 'attitudine all'osservazione arguta e giusta' (p. 20) and 'fine senso della concezione d'arte' (p. 24). He nonetheless remains convinced that he lacks an artistic vocation.

If Dario reveres Lostini and Bissi, he merely envies Lostini his self-confidence and effrontery. In Dario's analysis, the 'illusione di poter fare' (24) blinds Lostini to the mediocrity of his efforts and renders him insensitive to his friends' criticism. Lostini will reveal, however, an unexpected self-critical faculty and confound Dario's expectations.

The friends soon separate. Lenzi embarks on a successful legal career in Rome. Lostini's 'faccia tosta' assures him a career as journalist, critic, and poetaster in Milan. Bissi, however, stuns Dario by accepting a post as customs officer. Convinced that he cannot make a living from his concept of literature, and with a mother to support, he will write at night. The customs post is plainly a cipher for the boundary between real and ideal. Abandoning his exacerbated adolescent idealism, Bissi acknowledges the necessity of exchange between the two spheres.

Dario is appalled by Bissi's compromise which deprives him of an idealist role model. Already shaken by his perceived literary failure and the death of a vigorous father, he laments his 'orrendo destino' (p. 71). Bissi, however, refuses to pamper Dario's self-pity, brusquely asking: 'Che ti manca?' When Dario replies 'l'essenziale', Bissi insists that 'bisogna prendere la vita com'è'. His own visions of death or literary glory were mere 'sciocchezze da vanitoso'. Significantly, Dario detects an accusation in these words. Bissi seems to ask: 'Tu che speri? Sei nel caso di fare come farò io, occorrendo; ma non ti basta l'animo!'

Bissi, in fact, persistently attacks Dario's conviction of artistic impotence. Already, at the death of Dario's father, he has sought to comfort his friend by suggesting that 'soltanto l'arte purifica, eleva, trasportandoci in un'atmosfera dove i casi della vita, lieti o tristi, non hanno più nessuna importanza o hanno soltanto quella che loro proviene dalla possibilità di trasformarli in elementi di creazione' (p. 65). If Bissi believed Dario incapable of achieving salvation through art, this would be a perverse mode of consolation.

From his customs-post, Bissi strives to rekindle Dario's literary ambitions. 'E l'arte?', he writes, 'ne hai smesso ogni pensiero?' (p. 128). Dario, however, seeks to persuade Bissi that a living work of art is superior to literary creation. Awaiting the birth of his child, he writes comparing himself to a wizard who, enslaving natural forces, produces a creation 'più nobile e più elevata' (p. 88) than art. Bissi categorically replies that 'solo e vero mago è l'artista' (p.

136). As we have 'padronanza assoluta' over thought alone, art is the sole possible 'creazione umana' (p. 137) and is infinitely superior to the chance products of nature.

At this stage, then, Bissi espouses an aesthetic which, we have seen, Capuana associates with D'Annunzio's *Romanzi della rosa*. He subjugates life to art and transforms experiential data into 'elementi di creazione'. Dario, conversely, embraces the art-in-life of Cantelmo and Éffrena. All subsequent exchanges between the two friends involve a comparison between the two ideals.

Bissi's next intervention is an impromptu visit shortly before the birth of Dario's child. Bissi's physical appearances invariably coincide with a birth or death, as if to stress the superiority of his literary creations. We have already seen him comfort Dario on his father's death. He now announces the death of his own mother and the imminent appearance of his first novel. The implied comparison between natural and ideal creation is made explicit when Bissi likens writing to giving birth ('guardo l'opera mia con la stessa tenerezza, con la stessa compiacenza con cui una mamma deve certamente guardare la creaturina che poche ore avanti le ha straziato le viscere per venire alla luce' (p. 139)).

Dario promptly draws an analogy between Bissi's novel and his child, declaring that Fausta will soon deliver 'il mio capolavoro, di natura diversa' (p. 143). Again, however, Bissi insists that human will cannot master nature. Art is always superior to the 'misero organismo [...] che potrà essere un genio, un cretino, un delinquente senza che la nostra volontà c'entri per nulla' (p. 140). His words are born out when Fausta gives birth to a daughter. Seeking to console Dario by reading, Bissi again underlines the transcendent power of art.

There is evidence, however, that Bissi has embryonic doubts about the literary process. Work saves him from grief after his mother's death. Immediately after the funeral, he completes his novel in ten days of intense but sanity-saving work. Yet he now judges this sacrilegious, 'una cosa orrenda' (p. 137), 'una

mostruosità' (p. 138). He glimpses that a life of art may dehumanize and begins to look more indulgently upon Dario's ideal of art-in-life. This is the first hint that Capuana does not unambiguously condemn Dario's quest for a 'creazione vissuta'.

After Bissi's departure, Dario's next unexpected guest is Lostini. He arrives just as Dario briefly renounces *superomismo* and seeks reconciliation with Faust. Having made the most of modest talents, Lostini serves to encourage Dario to locate the ideal in the real. By this, however, he means the pursuit of a literary vocation. Like Bissi, he dismisses Dario's sense of artistic impotence and draws unfavourable comparisons between Dario's failed 'capolavoro' and artistic creation. With typical tactlessness, he simultaneously presents Dario with his latest novel and offers condolences for the loss of his daughter. Later, he explicitly likens his books to children. Despite their faults he loves them all, even his first 'mostricciattoli' (p. 193), for a father cannot be partial. He thus hints that Dario judges his own youthful literary efforts too harshly and unwittingly rebukes him for considering his child a 'mostricino' (p. 151; p. 154).

Lostini now appreciates that his friends' criticism had, together with his obstinate will, steered him towards literary success. In return, he wishes to involve Dario in his new journal and to reveal 'un gran critico nato' (p. 191). He has come to unearth 'questo poltrone' (p. 194) lest he squander 'tanti studi, tanta cultura, tanto acume critico'. Bissi's collaboration in the journal indicates that it is a serious venture.

Dario nonetheless judges Lostini's proposals 'una pazzia' (p. 191). He could never, like Lostini, be content to reach 'un punto più in là della mediocrità'. He believes too that he lacks the 'improntitudine' which might take his friend further. Lostini, however, insists that Dario has talent. The joy of mediocrity, he explains, is the perennial conviction that one is writing a masterpiece. Men of genius, conversely, 'dubitano, esitano davanti a le difficoltà, guardano troppo in alto (come un certo signore di mia conoscenza) e rimangono inerti, con gli occhi alle nuvole' (p.

196). A 'certo signore', had, of course, seen his hesitations as proof of mediocrity. An erroneous belief that true artists perform 'naturalmente, semplicemente la loro funzione' (p. 40) had reinforced his abulia.

The narrator assures us that he had long forgotten 'ogni velleità letteraria' (p. 190). Why, then, does the young Dario so heatedly dismiss Lostini's promptings with a 'Non insistere più!' (p. 194)? We sense that, in reality, his conscience is pricked. He clings desperately to a comforting inertia, dismissing Lostini's will as 'improntitudine'. He thus misses a genuine opportunity to exploit his critical talents.

Dario receives no further visits before his wife's death. Towards the end of her pregnancy, however, Bissi sends his second novel. Birth and writing are once more juxtaposed, and nature's creature proves the frailer. Bissi returns to console Dario on Fausta's death but cannot shake his determination to commit moral suicide. At this point, Lostini writes again to urge Dario's collaboration on his journal.

We perceive that Bissi's function is to oppose Dario's art-in-life and Lostini's to second Dario's attempts to forego exacerbated idealism. Each represents a different concept of resignation. The Schopenhauerian Bissi renounces the world in favour of aesthetic contemplation. The DeSanctisian Lostini locates the ideal within the real. Thus, in the Milanese episode, it is Lostini who urges Dario towards realistic application of his critical talents and Bissi who intervenes when Dario abandons the journal for a further living work of art.

Lostini makes no further appearance but, as we have seen, Bissi visits Dario at the novel's conclusion. Faced with Rosa/Fausta, his opposition to Dario's art-in-life is shaken. Enchanted by her artistic sensibility, he confesses that Dario may have achieved his living masterpiece in rescuing a 'creatura informe' (p. 315) from the caprices of Nature. Yet Dario, persuaded that heredity and

environment will thwart his calculations, now shares Bissi's original conviction that artistic creation is superior.

Bissi, however, remarks that even literary characters rebel against their creator's will. An author must follow them 'nella logica dei loro errori, senza poter farli deviare' (p. 313). With Rosa/Fausta, then, Dario may err less in pursuing a living work of art than in bending his creation to a preconceived end. An impersonal aesthetic demands that she evolve autonomously.

Ironically, Dario abandons his ideal of art-in-life just as it may be realized. He acquires a belief in the superiority of literary creation that Bissi increasingly questions. We have seen that, following his mother's death, Bissi glimpses the dehumanizing potential of art. Literary success has now permitted him to abandon his job at the symbolic customs-post for a life of aesthetic seclusion. He appears to fear that in devoting himself entirely to the ideal, he has shed something of his humanity. The preternaturally youthful vigour which awes the precociously decrepit Dario hints at a Faustian pact. If Bissi initially jolts Dario's exacerbated idealism by manning the border between real and ideal, he appears ultimately to abandon the real.

A new-won conviction that the will is only free in art does not, however, spur Dario to literary endeavour. Renouncing the world, he believes that the aesthetic sphere is equally closed to him.[117] Having persistently refuted the contention of both Bissi and Lostini that he underestimates his talents, he merely envies Bissi's genius.

In his fatalistic resignation, however, he fails to perceive that Lostini personifies another form of resignation, consisting in the acceptance of limitations and the shrewd exploitation of modest means. Where Dario explicity views the significantly named Bissi (i.e. 'bis') as an ideological double, he dismisses the deceptively clownish Lostini, who, through application of the will, makes good unpromising beginnings. While posing as a champion of the will,

conversely, Dario renounces his ambition at the first setback and clings to the self-serving belief that he is artistically impotent.

We must, however, find the implied contrast between Lostini and Dario simplistic. If Lostini's efforts underline the protagonist's unconfessed abulia, we are not persuaded that Dario can simply shrug off inertia through force of will. Capuana has too convincingly depicted the corrosive combined influence of positivist self-analysis and exacerbated idealism. A DeSanctisian location of the ideal within the real appears beyond his reach. Indeed, Lostini's presence merely undermines Capuana's ambition to portray a generational malaise. If Dario's cultural milieu can produce a Lostini, the protagonist may appear no more representative than Butti's Attilio Valda. Dario too may seem typical of 'gli esseri fiacchi e sconclusionati di tutti i luoghi e di tutti i tempi'.

In the final analysis, however, ideological authority does not unambiguously reside in Lostini. Capuana's judgment remains suspended between the rival forms of resignation embodied by Bissi and Lostini and Dario's art-in-life. Like Elio Ramis in *Gastigo*, Dario's final 'creazione vissuta' is conceived as an act of contrition. In Rosa/Fausta, he may realize an ideal more human than Bissi's aestheticism and achieve an authentic 'connubio' of life and art. Capuana's original intention may have been to endorse a concept of resignation. Ultimately, however, like the novelist-hero of 'Dolce potere', he views the resigned from an ironic distance, portraying Bissi as a dehumanized idealist and Lostini as a cheerful mediocrity.

If *Rassegnazione* satirically underlines the conceptual leap from Aurispa's abulia to Cantelmo's *superomismo*, it finally reflects Capuana's qualified critical respect for the later D'Annunzio's refusal to place 'l'arte da un lato, la realtà dall'altro'. The ideal of 'arte in vita' is not definitively dismissed as a futile attempt to pit will against nature. Dario's frustration with Rosa/Fausta suggests that D'Annunzio's principal error is to view art as a pure emanation of the creator's will. Refused the right to evolve

autonomously, D'Annunzio's creatures cannot acquire 'forma vitale'.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1] Luigi Capuana, *Rassegnazione* (Milan: Treves, 1907), p. 89.

[2] Only in recent years, however, have parallels between the two novels been widely acknowledged. Among earlier critics, Tonelli and Mario Marcazzan both perceive a denunciation of *superomismo* and arid intellectualism but argue that Capuana targets not D'Annunzio but Hegel. (See Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 13, and Mario Marcazzan, 'Dal romanticismo al decadentismo', *Letteratura italiana: le correnti*, 2 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1956), II, 663-896 (p. 827)). As Sipala notes (Sipala, p. 55), the failure of early critics to perceive allusions to D'Annunzio is particularly surprising in the case of Pirandello whose unpublished review of *Rassegnazione* is printed in Sipala, pp. 121-23.

Other commentators, such as Caccia, Marchese, and Traversa, present the protagonist, a self-confessed 'inetto' and 'indifferente', as a forerunner of the heroes of Svevo, Tozzi, Borgese, and Moravia (Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 2909, Marchese, p. 142, Traversa, p. 122). Although a suggestive reading, this disregards extensive allusions to D'Annunzio and removes the novel from its literary-historical context. Of these critics, only Traversa detects D'Annunzian elements, arguing that Capuana charts the disintegration of an abulic personality after the manner of *Il piacere*. He sees, however, no parodic intent. Similarly, Mario Zangara, observes similarities between Dario and Claudio Cantelmo but discounts 'l'idea d'una segreta intenzione caricaturale' (Zangara, p. 82). Unintended parallels stem from a shared ambition to portray an identical crisis of values.

[3] Scalia, p. 241.

[4] See also Sipala, for whom Dario is 'in negativo, Claudio Cantelmo' (Sipala, p. 55).

[5] Davies, p. 109.

[6] Storti Abate, p. 136.

[7] Cappello, pp. 131-32.

[8] Madrignani, p. 249.

[9] Oliva, p. 123.

[10] Pullini, 'Capuana: *Rassegnazione* tra inetti e superuomini', cit., p. 123.

[11] Ibid., p. 115.

[12] Ibid., p. 134.

[13] Ibid., p. 123. In support of his contention, Pullini cites only Oriani's *La disfatta* . Yet there is little evidence of authentic *superomismo* in De Nittis, the elderly, disabused, idealist philosopher who dreams of leaving his widow 'tutta la propria anima in un bambino biondo e sorridente' (Alfredo Oriani, *La disfatta* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1953), p. 17) but deems it only just that he should father a sickly, short-lived child.

[14] Pullini, 'Capuana: *Rassegnazione* tra inetti e superuomini', cit., p. 129.

[15] Luigi Capuana, 'G. D'Annunzio: *Giovanni Episcopo* e *L'innocente*', cit., p. 113.

[16] Luigi Capuana, 'Idealismo e cosmopolitismo: I', in Capuana, *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, pp. 8-13 (p. 12) (first publ. in *Roma di Roma*, 30 April 1896).

[17] Luigi Capuana, 'Idealismo e cosmopolitismo', in Capuana, *Scritti critici*, pp. 303-24 (p. 308). This consists of two articles, 'Appunti critici: III' and 'Polemica letteraria', published in *Roma di Roma*, 10 and 17 May 1896. The second is a response to Ugo Ojetti, 'La difesa di Empedocle', *Roma di Roma*, 16 May 1896.

[18] Ibid., p. 311.

[19] Ibid., p. 310.

[20] Ibid., p. 311.

[21] Ibid., p. 312.

[22] Ibid, p. 320

.

[23] Ibid., p. 321.

[24] Sipala, p. 55, Pullini, 'Capuana: *Rassegnazione* tra inetti e superuomini', cit., p. 113, Storti Abate, p. 136, Cappello, p. 131.

[25] Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. [i].

[26] Quoted in Davies, p. 106. Oddly, having established that Capuana works on *Rassegnazione* from 1894 to 1907, Davies follows critical tradition in discussing it before *Il marchese di Roccaverdina.*

[27] Published in Zappulla Muscarà, *Capuana e De Roberto*, pp. 349-50 (p. 350) and pp. 352-53 (p. 353). Davies puzzlingly glosses 'la prima parte' as 'most of the first half' (Davies, p. 106).

[28] Raya, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana*, p. 97.

[29] Published in Zappulla Muscarà, *Capuana e De Roberto*, p. 362.

[30] Raya, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana*, p. 113. These are substantially unaltered in the first published edition.

[31] Luigi Capuana, '*Il fuoco* di Gabriele D'Annunzio', *Rivista d'Italia*, 3 (1900), 475-88 (largely repr. in Gino Raya, *Ottocento inedito* (Rome: Ciranna, 1960), pp. 212-16 (p. 213)).

[32] Ibid., p. 215.

[33] Ibid., p. 214 and p. 213.

[34] Oliva, pp. 119-21.

[35] Guy de Maupassant, *Pierre et Jean* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), p. 15 and p. 18.

[36] Capuana, '*Il fuoco* di Gabriele D'Annunzio', cit., p. 215. For the influence of Croce and Pirandello on Capuana's later criticism, see Antonio Palermo, 'Per una rivalutazione dell'ultimo Capuana', cit., passim.

[37] Luigi Capuana, 'L'arte e la vita', *Nuova antologia*, 118 (1905), 217-25 (p. 221).

[38] Ibid., p. 220.

[39] Scalia, p. 170. See also Mario Pomilio, Introduction to Capuana, *Verga e D'Annunzio*, cit., p. 47.

[40] Published in Oliva, pp. 128-29 (p. 128).

[41] Ibid., pp. 127-28.

[42] Published in Alfredo Barbina, 'Due ipotesi di lavoro del Capuana', *Critica letteraria*, 6 (1978), 285-97 (pp. 293-94).

[43] This appears to be a reliable assessment of a thirty-year acquaintance which Gino Raya rightly describes as 'non intensa ma costante e leale' (Raya, *Ottocento inedito*, p. 157). At its closest in the early 1880s, when the young D'Annunzio astutely courts the influential critic (see the correspondence published in *Ottocento inedito*, pp. 162-96), their relationship remains sufficiently warm for Capuana to include D'Annunzio amongst the recipients, in 1887, of a photograph of himself posing as a corpse, together with an erroneous prediction of the date of his death (ibid., pp. 188-90). Two years later, despite Capuana's severe critique of *Il piacere*, D'Annunzio sends a facsimile of an etching by 'Andrea Sperelli' (ibid., p. 192). Throughout the 1890s and the period of Capuana's most intense critical engagement with D'Annunzio, D'Annunzio continues to present Capuana with copies of his work, accompanied by flattering 'omaggi' to the 'acutissimo artista' and allusions to an 'antico e sempre memore affetto' (ibid., p. 192). As evidenced by Capuana's defence of D'Annunzio against Borgese, Ladenarda, and those gleefully anticipating the failure of *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien*, their (essentially epistolary) friendship seems to have intensified in the first decade of the new century. Thus, in a letter, of 10 August 1905, D'Annunzio expresses his pleasure at a 'rinovellamento della nostra vecchia amicizia' and hails Capuana in the following terms: 'Tu fosti il testimone affettuoso del mio primo sforzo; e tu m'hai seguito, nel lungo lavoro, con affetto sincero e costante.' (ibid., p. 194). Nothing suggest, then, that personal animosity colours the anti-D'Annunzian polemic in Capuana's criticism and satirical narrative. One should stress too that *Rassegnazione* is published when Capuana's relationship with D'Annunzio is at its most cordial.

[44] Published ibid., pp. 217-30.

[45] In a letter dated '21 del 1915', published ibid., pp. 231-32.

[46] Ibid., pp. 194-96.

[47] Luigi Capuana, 'Segreti d'arte', in Capuana, *Anime a nudo*, pp. 7-31 (p. 15) (first publ. in *Flegrea*, February 1899).

[48] Ibid., p. 14.

[49] Ibid., p. 15.

[50] Ibid., p. 15.

[51] Ibid., p. 31.

[52] Luigi Capuana, *Gastigo*, *Nuova antologia*, 95 (1900), 483-97 (p. 490).

[53] Ibid., p. 498.

[54] Ibid., p. 486.

[55] Ibid., p. 488.

[56] Ibid., p. 487.

[57] Ibid., p. 491.

[58] Ibid., p. 490.

[59] Ibid., p. 498.

[60] Ibid., p. 493.

[61] Ibid., p. 498.

[62] Luigi Capuana, 'Dolce potere', in Luigi Capuana, *Figure intraviste* (Rome: Voghera, 1908), pp. 175-88 (p. 180).

[63] Ibid., p. 183 and p. 182.

[64] Ibid., p. 186.

[65] Ibid., p. 187.

[66] D'Annunzio, *Le vergini delle rocce*, cit., p. 418 and p. 444. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[67] Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 32. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[68] Davies, p. 107.

[69] Enrico Annibale Butti, *L'automa*, in Enrico Annibale Butti, *L'automa. L'incantesimo*, ed. by Giuliano Manacorda (Bologna: Cappelli, 1968), pp. 35-274 (p. 215).

[70] Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 15, and Butti, *L'automa*, cit., p. 101.

[71] Butti, *L'automa*, cit., p. 39.

[72] Capuana, 'Romanzi e novelle: E. A. Butti, Neera, L. Gualdo', cit., p. 78.

[73] Paul Bourget, *Un crime d'amour* (Paris: Lemerre, 1886), p. 11.

[74] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il trionfo della morte*, in D'Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi*, I, 651-1049 (p. 737). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[75] The death itself echoes a passage in *Il trionfo della morte* where Aurispa imagines his own father felled by a stroke (ibid., p. 737).

[76] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *L'innocente*, in D'Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi*, I, 369-650 (p. 445).

[77] Capuana, *La sfinge*, cit., p. 487.

[78] Luigi Capuana, 'Lettera d'uno scettico', in Capuana, *Racconti*, III (1974), 149-54 (p. 150) (first publ. in *Regina*, 5 October 1904).

[79] Bourget, *Le Disciple*, p. 136.

[80] Capuana, 'Lettera d'uno scettico', cit., p. 151.

[81] Ibid., p. 154.

[82] This type of ambiguity is common in Capuana's short stories of the early 1900s. The hero of 'Chi sa?' (first publ. in *Novissima*, 1 (1901) and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, III, 422-26), for instance, throws a banquet to celebrate the suicide of a lover yet strikes the narrator as 'un sentimentale camuffato da scettico e da egoista' (ibid., pp. 423-24).

[83] Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 13.

[84] Capuana may intend here a contrast with a further literary precedent, Dossi's Alberto Pisani. Like Dario, Pisani ruthlessly analyses himself only to obtain a conviction of irremediable insensitivity and intellectual mediocrity. He too deems his physical frailty palpable proof of impotence and, attempting to write, is overwhelmed by doubts. These derive, however, from 'un cert'osso in noi altri italiani pronunciatìssimo' (Carlo Dossi, *Vita di Alberto Pisani*, in Carlo Dossi, *Dossi*, ed. by C. Linati (Milan: Garzanti, 1944), pp. 74-218 (p. 135)). 'Oh quante volte', the narrator sighs, 'non si fà qualche cosa non reputàndosene atti! "dammi quel ferro" -- "pesa" -- non s'è ancora toccato'. Yet Pisani, an authentic *malato d'ideali*, overcomes his doubts and creates.

[85] Compare with Cantelmo's 'ideal tipo latino' (D'Annunzio, *Le vergini delle rocce*, cit., p. 414).

[86] D'Annunzio, *L'innocente*, cit., p. 513.

[87] One cannot, however, altogether dismiss the suspicion that his contradictions indicate an altered conception of the character on Capuana's part. The Cantelmo-inspired episode may appear grafted onto rebarbative existing material. Dario's revised self-portrait jars particularly when, seeking to establish his reproductive potential, he asserts that his delicate organism is suddenly 'rafforzato' (Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 77).

There is further evidence of discontinuous composition in the novel's secondary characters. The opening section would lead us to anticipate that Capuana will trace the parallel careers of Dario and his three friends, Bissi, Lenzi, and Lostini. Lenzi, however, substantially vanishes from the second part onwards and, on his few appearances, appears to be confused with Lostini. Vetro rightly senses a 'stonatura' when the dignified Lenzi frivolously suggests that Dario marry his sister (Vetro, p. 256). This would be more typical of Lostini.

[88] Luigi Capuana, 'L'incredibile esperimento', in Capuana, *Racconti*, III, 254-60 (p. 259) (first publ. in *Flegrea*, 5 February 1900).

[89] Ibid., p. 254.

[90] Lest this sound far-fetched, comically significant English and German names are common in Capuana's tales of the early 1900s. One thinks of Lost Loiterer ('Americanata'), Joshua Prawn ('Il giornale mobile'), and, in particular, the emasculated Professor von Schwächen of the University of Entmannt and his randy pupil Ermanno Hart ('Due scoperte').

[91] Letter of 27 February 1900 published in Zappulla Muscarà, *Capuana e De Roberto*, p. 374.

[92] The themes of 'L'incredibile esperimento' are particularly echoed in 'Creazione' (first publ. in Luigi Capuana, *Il decameroncino* (Catania: Giannotta, 1901) and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, II, 285-90), where a spiritualist creates an ideal woman by occult means, in 'La redenzione dei capolavori' (first publ. in *Natura ed arte*, 1 April 1900, and repr. in *Racconti*, II, 261-66), where science is combined with the D'Annunzian quest for 'l'arte in vita' in an attempt to bring works of art to life, in 'Il gran viaggio' (Capuana, *Anime a nudo*, pp. 59-69), where a spiritualist seeks to create a new aristocracy freed from the pull of matter, and in 'Elios! (Dal taccuino di un matto)' (first publ. in *Varietas*, July 1906, and repr. in Capuana, *Figure intraviste*, pp. 61-74), where the protagonist maintains that, by absorbing sun-rays and avoiding woman, one can create living art exempt from the imperfections of nature.

[93] Pullini, 'Capuana: *Rassegnazione* tra inetti e superuomini', cit., p. 123.

[94] Bourget, *Le disciple*, p. 153, Neera, *Senio*, *Nuova antologia*, 35 (1891), 300-18, 482-98, 685-708 (p. 695), 36 (1891), 64-83, 307-31, and Enrico Annibale Butti, *L'incantesimo*, in Butti, *L'automa. L'incantesimo*, pp. 283-558 (p. 298).

[95] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il piacere*, in D'Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi*, I, 1-367 (p. 27), and *Giovanni Episcopo*, in *Prose di romanzi*, II, 331-94 (p. 374).

[96] Paradigmatically, Greslou writes that 'je m'étais promis une fois pour toutes de rayer l'amour du programme de ma vie' (Bourget, *Le Disciple*, p. 153).

[97] Dario inherits Cantelmo's predilection for capitalization.

[98] Only Oliva detects similarities between the attitudes of Dario and Tullio Hermil following their child's death (Oliva, p. 123).

[99] D'Annunzio, *L'innocente*, cit., p. 375.

[100] There are female revenge suicides in Capuana's 'Parola di donna' (first publ. in *Nuova antologia*, 99 (1902) and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, III, 5-44) and 'Oh quel silenzio!' (first publ. in *La riviera ligure*, no. 35 (1902), and repr. in Capuana, *Racconti*, II, 406-10).

[101] D'Annunzio, *Il piacere*, cit., p. 89.

[102] Compare with Sperelli's concept of life as 'un'opera d'arte' in process (ibid., p. 37).

[103] Ibid., p. 37.

[104] There is another literary parallel here. In Butti's *L'automa*, Attilio Valda arrives in Milan intending to devote himself to art. He fluctuates, however, between a life of sensuality and a series of industrious 'vite nuove' in which he is encouraged by his 'buon genio salvatore', Stefano (Butti, *L'automa*, cit., p. 251). Like Dario, he views himself as a *malato d'ideali*, but, in reality, is paralysed by abulia. Lostini might be seen as Dario's Stefano.

[105] See D'Annunzio, *Il trionfo della morte*, cit., pp. 781-94.

[106] Tonelli, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 13. See also Marchese, p. 138, Zangara, p. 86, Traversa, p. 125, and Davies, p. 109.

[107] See Vetro, p. 252, Caccia, 'Luigi Capuana', cit., p. 2909, and Villa, Introduction to Capuana, *Le paesane*, cit., p. 76.

[108] Letter of 14 February 1895 published in Zappulla Muscarà, *Capuana e De Roberto*, p. 350.

[109] Letter of 27 February 1900 published ibid., p. 376.

[110] Pullini, 'Capuana: *Rassegnazione* tra inetti e superuomini', cit., p. 134.

[111] Ibid., p. 135.

[112] He now regrets that he loved his wife solely when he was no longer in a position to console or to compensate her and fears that she may have died 'non tanto per un difetto dell'organismo, quanto per l'immenso dolore di non essere riuscita ad imporsi al mio cuore' (Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 304). Once again, he plays down his role in Fausta's death. We also note that Dario's love for Fausta ultimately depends on a consoling conviction that he is powerless to act.

[113] *Rosa*'s very name underlines D'Annunzio's failure to transcend convincingly the analysis of the *Romanzi della rosa.*

[114] Dario's Hegelianism subverts *don* Luca's faith that even the humblest contribute to society and thus justifies his 'resigned' inertia.

[115] Capuana, 'Il benefattore', cit., p. 46.

[116] Lenzi's principal function is to throw Dario's views on woman and marriage into relief. Dario, whose chastity and disapproval of non-procreative sex recall Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, regards Lenzi's womanizing as 'bestiale' (Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 91). He approves, however, of Lenzi's determination to remain a bachelor, 'un uomo forte' (ibid., p. 92), arguing that 'l'artista e l'uomo politico dovrebbe imitare il missionario: votarsi al celibato'. Dario's conviction is shaken by Lenzi's subsequent engagement.

[117] Unless, of course, one interprets Dario's memoirs as a literary creation. Having failed to create his living work of art, Dario may seek to forge a coherent character from the raw material of his life, striving, like Luciano Ércoli in 'Segreti d'arte', to place himself in a flattering light. Abandoning art-in-life for an aesthetic which subjugates life to art, he again, fails, however, to impose his will upon his material. The abulic real-life model constantly emerges from beneath the portrait of a *superuomo.*

# CONCLUSION

Our study of Capuana's five novels shows that he neither passively reflects the crisis of the Unitary state nor moves from an engaged positivism to a disorientated idealism. The 'involutional' view of Capuana's career fails to acknowledge the presence of opposing models of idealism in his work. We have charted conflict between a Hegelian idealism, which posits freedom through self-knowledge and seeks synthesis of body and mind, and dualistic forms of idealism which fragment consciousness. Far from attempting a progressive rehabilitation of will and conscience, Capuana's novels reveal a growing scepticism towards the possibility of transcending ideological conditioning. In his post-1890 fiction, belief in Hegelian synthesis falters, and the consciousness increasingly struggles to overcome ascetic idealism and atavistic thought-forms.

In this respect, Capuana's work becomes steadily less idealistic from *Profumo* onwards. Loss of Hegelian optimism does not, however, lead Capuana towards a compromise with decadentism or neo-Catholicism. Each is lucidly diagnosed as dangerously dualistic. Only towards the end of *Rassegnazione* does Capuana adopt a more indulgent stance towards non-Hegelian idealism. Yet, here too, he stresses the dehumanizing potential of both Dario's art-in-life and Bissi's aestheticism, and suspends judgment between these and Lostini's attempts to reconcile real and ideal.

If, in his later novels, Capuana depicts a cultural milieu dominated by forms of ascetic idealism, he does not mourn the passing of the positivist optimism which sustained the post-*Risorgimento* bourgeoisie. In his earlier work, he highlights positivism's debt to Catholic dualism and shows how it too divorces subject from object, man from nature, male from female. If positivism directs Capuana's contemporaries away from abstract ideals to the phenomenal world, it nonetheless errs in viewing that world as an observable other. In Capuana's analysis, positivism carries the seeds of idealist reaction within itself. The dualism that it

inherits from Catholicism mutates into decadentism. Capuana's later protagonists are riven by both positivist analysis and transcendental idealism. Charting the growing crisis of the positivist united Italy, Capuana shows its informing ideology to be inherently flawed.

Critics have overlooked an evolving political and ideological discourse in Capuana's work. They argue that, reluctant to question the basis of the post-*Risorgimento* settlement, Capuana increasingly retreats from socio-historical reality as working-class unrest undermines the liberal state.

The societal critique of the first *Giacinta* is dismissed as a youthful homage to the *Scapigliatura*, soon rejected along with Zola's engaged socialism. Our analysis of Capuana as a lucid historical observer demands, however, that we take its polemics seriously. Giacinta is the victim of a speculative, materialist milieu not only in her 'fall' but in her lay fatalism. Convinced that the consciousness is powerless to transcend genetic and societal determinants, she merely accepts society's judgment. Her apparent revolt is the suicide to which her milieu urges her. Only the 'resignation' advocated by her confessor would demand a genuine application of the will and a struggle with conditioning. This she dismisses as beyond her strength. The materialism and lay fatalism that Giacinta learns from the Marullis are the popular manifestation of Follini's scientific positivism. Just as Follini believes himself incapable of active intervention, Giacinta too accepts her societally determined 'destiny'.

In *Profumo*, conversely, Patrizio and Eugenia overcome fatalism. Patrizio is the representative of a lay state which inherits the repressive dualism of its Catholic predecessor. He comes to understand that positivism and ascetic idealism combine to divorce him from the natural, feminine, and instinctive. Instructive models of synthesis then coax him from a renunciatory concept of resignation to a reconciliation of mind and body. *Profumo* is Capuana's most optimistic novel. Its optimism, however, looks beyond the 'analytic' positivism of the

Unitary state to a future 'synthetic' age. It reveals not quietist faith in progressive liberalism but yearning for a DeSanctisian regeneration, where a nation desiccated by abstract ideals is reinvigorated through contact with the natural. Positivism usefully directs contemporary man towards the concrete but ultimately place a barrier between observing subject and object, and fosters the materialism personified in Ruggiero.

*La sfinge* reveals growing doubts as to the possibility of national regeneration. This pivotal novel depicts the débris of a discredited Unitary state, rocked by financial scandals. The widow and child of a bankrupt speculator face a choice between destructive positivism (Butironi) and an exasperatedly dualistic idealism (Montani). Follini's impotence has mutated into Butironi's corrosive analysis, Geltrude's Catholicism into Montani's decadentism. *La sfinge* offers no model of synthesis between flesh and spirit, subject and object. It portrays a fight to the death between two equally repressive ideologies which is settled by Montani's suicide.

*Il marchese di Roccaverdina* partly echoes the pessimism of *La sfinge*. Its protagonist proves incapable of transcending an atavistic ideology which posits a master/slave relationship between feudal lord and subject, man and nature, male and female, spirit and flesh. His redemptive death, however, expresses a yearning for synthesis and looks forward to a revised political settlement which reconciles master and man.

Yet the precise historical location of this synthesis is problematic. The novel (published in 1901) is set in the years immediately following Unification. Those few critics who perceive a critique of feudalism argue that it records a repressive society subsequently swept away by bourgeois liberalism. It would thus represent a staunch defence of a 'synthetic' Unitary Italy. Yet *Profumo* portrays a state which perpetuates the *marchese*'s master/slave ideology, and *La sfinge* charts its moral bankruptcy. If Capuana portrays co-operation between landowner and worker in 'Il benefattore', the catalyst is significantly an outsider. Rather than

a historical novel, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* is a response to the Sicily of the *Fasci*, portraying as yet irreconciled extremes. After the pessimism of *La sfinge*, it reasserts the possibility of synthesis but locates it in a problematic future.

Of Capuana's novels, *Rassegnazione* contains the fewest references, direct or allegorical, to historical reality. Its one precise historical indicator is, however, significant. The death of Dario's father coincides with the defeat of the Italian imperialist forces at Dogali.[1] As in *La sfinge*, a parallel is implied between an absent father-figure and a discredited post-*Risorgimento* state, and Dario's quest for art-in-life is located within an ideological vacuum.[2] Like Fulvia and child, he is buffeted between idealism and destructively analytical positivism. Yet Dario describes his idealism as Hegelian. Does Capuana, then, in his final novel, explicitly reject the Hegelian faith which, mediated by De Sanctis, informs *Profumo*?

Dario regards as Hegelian the belief that nature can be remodelled with 'riflessione'. Crucially, however, he posits an objective distance between himself and nature. Nature, in the form of woman (Fausta, Savina, Rosa), is the raw material for rational manipulation. Dario fails to heed the Hegelian lesson that one can only know and act upon nature by abandoning the subject/object dichotomy and recognizing the natural within oneself. As Dario himself glimpses, Hegelian ideas are 'commiste e confuse con tante altre idee di opposta natura' in his thought.[3] A positivism which externalizes nature and a dualistic, decadent idealism combine to distort his Hegelianism.

Dario fails to understand his 'artistic' medium, regarding it as inherently other to himself. He thus remains impotent and is reduced to a hollow exaltation of the will. In Capuana's analysis, the neo-idealism of Dario's generation is based on a partial reading of Hegel. Were Dario to abandon his controlling distance and grant his creature the status of subject, he might achieve his ideal of art-in-life.

Lostini provides a more authentic model of Hegelian (or DeSanctisian) idealism, taking himself as his raw material and pursuing self-knowledge and self-mastery. Capuana stops short, however, of endorsing Lostini's location of the ideal within the real. Ultimately, Lostini's aspirations are as comical in their exaggerated modesty as Dario's grandiose *superomismo*. At its conclusion, Capuana's ideological discourse remains suspended between the Hegelian synthesis imaged in *Profumo* and an aesthetic idealism tempered by Hegelianism.

* * * *

In plotting Capuana's ideological and political engagement, we have been led to reject a number of the criticisms most frequently leveled at his novels. In particular, we have challenged the contention that Capuana establishes no authentic nexus between foregrounded characters and backdrop, and that his characters are resolved in physiological rather than environmental terms. Where earlier critics have perceived local colour, raw ethnological data, or functional props, we have identified elements in a dialectic. Milieu and secondary character embody contending ideologies or suggest possibilities of synthesis. They serve to hasten or to hinder the freeing of the protagonists' consciousness. Capuana's characters actively seek isolation from society. Building a hermetic 'nido', however, they are confronted with an inescapable ideological inheritance. This is externalized in a milieu which demands to be read in an allegorical key. Capuana does not isolate his characters in order to observe physiological processes in laboratory conditions but to show how ideology becomes flesh.

In *Giacinta*, the heroine believes that she escapes society by secluding herself with Andrea. She fails to see that she inherits her milieu's lay fatalism, and that society brings these two marginalized figures together and wills them to self-destruction. If the *salotto Marulli* is only sketchily evoked in socio-economic terms, it is not populated by the wooden caricatures of critical tradition. *Signora* Marulli, Mochi, even Giacinta's maidservant

Marietta embody the cynical materialism of popular positivism. Follini provides no counterbalance, offering only an impotent objectivity.

A true alternative is offered only by the resignation of Giacinta's confessor and of the Besozzis. In a zero-focalized narrative, however, Capuana fails to persuade us that Giacinta is capable of transcending ideological conditioning. The conflict between repressive ideology and free will is not convincingly dramatized. The possibility of freedom through self-knowledge remains a question of narratorial assertion.

The adoption of internal focalization in *Profumo* permits Capuana to depict the freeing of the consciousness from within. Here too the protagonists seek to escape societal determinants. In isolation, however, they remain in thrall to the dualistic ideologies of Catholic asceticism and positivism. These are personified by Geltrude and Ruggiero and imaged by the monastery and the tax-office. In contrast, the inhabitants of Marzallo are not colourful regional types, depicted by a continentalized author, but the incarnation of a healthy synthesis of body and mind. Their pantheistic religious practices are not ethnological data but an instructive counterpoint to the protagonists' self-mortification. The Marzallesi thus assist Mola to lure Patrizio and Eugenia from isolation towards a reconciliation with the natural.

If the Sicilian milieu of *Profumo* demands to be interpreted in an exclusively allegorical key, that of *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* may be read, in part, as a document of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Allusions to popular Catholicism reveal, however, hagiographical subtexts which, again, urge the protagonist to forego dualism in favour of a synthesis of flesh and spirit.

As in *Profumo*, the protagonist is torn between atavistic religious asceticism (embodied by the *baronessa di Lagomorto* and Tindaro) and materialistic positivism (personified by Pergola). His political and agricultural projects are not semi-autobiographical

digressions but attempts to reintegrate a divided self through union with the soil and exaltation of the will. *In extremis*, the *marchese* seeks to attain the image of synthesis offered by Agrippina and Don Silvio.

In *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, the milieu supports not only hagiographical but mythico-literary subtexts. In *La sfinge* and *Rassegnazione*, these become a significant component of Capuana's narrative dialectic. In the former, the alternation of Sphinx/Ariadne imagery shows how Montani fails to transcend decadent sexual iconography. In the latter, allusions to D'Annunzio's *Romanzi della rosa* undercut Dario's imitation of Claudio Cantelmo and polemically highlight the ideological leap between D'Annunzio's abulic early protagonists and his self-willed *superuomini*.

Critics of these two novels have seen a final retreat from the evocation of socio-economic reality to the exploration of ahistorical subjective experience. We have argued that their critique of contending dualistic ideologies and unacknowledged political subtext constitute a coherent response to the crisis of the ideological state. It is nonetheless undeniable that milieu in these novels has little existence beyond the ideal projections of the protagonists' psyche. This does not imply, however, a shift in authorial interest from object to subject. We have seen that Capuana persistently stresses the need to break down the subject/object dichotomy. It indicates, rather, growing pessimism as to the possibility of reconciling self and other in an unfavourable ideological environment.

The increasing isolation of subject is mirrored in narrative technique. In *Profumo*, internal focalization alternates between Patrizio and Eugenia and itself provides an image of synthesis. In *La sfinge* and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, conversely, only the male protagonist's psyche is consistently portrayed from within. The *marchese*'s perspective, however, is counterbalanced by externally focalized dramatic scenes and, particularly in the early chapters, by a zero-focalizing narrator. In *La sfinge*, all

information is filtered through the distorting prism of Montani's consciousness. Unfolding in a series of unreliable analepses, it pre-empts the homodiegetic narrative of *Rassegnazione*.

Just as the narrative techniques of *La sfinge* and *Rassegnazione* imply no possibility of reconciling subject and object, there is no unambiguous intradiegetic model of synthesis. *La sfinge* depicts only the extremes of aesthetic idealism (Montani) and destructive positivist analysis (Butironi), and *Rassegnazione* suggests that Lostini and Bissi err on the side of the real and the ideal respectively.

As we have charted Capuana's increasingly pessimistic treatment of the subject/object dichotomy, we have been led to reappraise his portrayal of woman. For previous critics, his early novels study constitutionally neurotic females from the tranquil perspective of the positive male while his later novels offer concessions to decadent sexual iconography. We have found, however, that Capuana persistently censures both positivist and idealist concepts of womanhood as dangerously dualistic. The former identifies the feminine with matter, with nature, with the other. The latter views woman as, alternately, nature's stooge and incarnation of the spirit.

Thus, in *Giacinta*, Follini can only understand the heroine once he abandons positivist objectivity and recognizes the existence of the irrational and instinctive within himself. In *Profumo*, Eugenia is, likewise, victim of a positivism which, in its scientific aspect, views her as neurotic animal, and, in its lay manifestation (Ruggiero), as means toward sexual pleasure. Her consciousness is further fragmented by an ascetic Catholicism for which she is, in turn, virgin and temptress. In *La sfinge*, Butironi sees Fulvia as eternal patient, while, for the would-be decadent Montani, she is alternately the self-sacrificing muse Ariadne and the energy-sapping Sphinx. In *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, a feudal master-slave ideology casts Agrippina as sexual object, while, as in *Profumo*, medieval Catholicism perceives an instrument of perdition.

In *Rassegnazione*, finally, positivism and an idealism which Dario terms Hegelian, but which is more properly Schopenhauerian, initially combine to persuade him that woman is the natural enemy of the spiritual male. As he seeks to overcome his fear of woman, Dario is caught between two idealist constructs. On one hand, woman remains malleable matter. On the other, she becomes asexual muse and partner in ideal creation. If the protagonists of *Giacinta*, *Profumo*, and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* glimpse, to varying degrees, the 'feminine' within the male self, Montani and Dario remain trapped within a dualistic view of the psyche. Fulvia and Fausta lucidly diagnose their error but are powerless to reconcile spirit and flesh.

* * * *

The Capuana that emerges from our reading of his five novels is an engaged cultural analyst. He seeks primarily to show how contending ideologies fragment both the psyche and the body politic, pitting flesh against spirit, male against female, class against class. Our study thus calls into question the prevalent critical assumption that writers of Capuana's class and generation gradually forego the historical for the personal, retreating from the depiction of socio-economic reality to the exploration of subjective experience.

In the novels of Capuana's 'involuzione', we have detected a lucid response to a changing cultural and political context. We have seen, however, that his earlier works are no reflection of positivist optimism. He does not study a Sicilian milieu in a spirit of ethnological curiosity or seek to smooth the process of national integration by depicting provincial reality for a continental readership. We have plotted allegorical subtexts in passages too often dismissed as folkloric and caricatural. These show a Sicily where the Unitary state proves as repressive as its feudal and Catholic predecessors.

Capuana's fiction looks beyond the post-*Risorgimento* settlement to a 'synthetic' age where man and nature are reconciled. It does not, then, passively reflect the ideology of the liberal, positivist bourgeoisie. We must reject the critical tradition whereby Capuana, unlike De Sanctis, Verga, or De Roberto, does not contest the structures and achievements of the Unitary state. For Capuana, too, the *Risorgimento* is incomplete.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 37.

[2] In Capuana's other novels, too, fatherlessness is a cipher for an ideological void. The absence of Giacinta's biological father leads her to adopt, in turn, the materialist Mochi, her confessor and Follini as authority figures. In *Profumo*, Mola comes to replace the father that Patrizio loses in childhood, and to offset the ascetic influence of Geltrude. The early loss of both mother and father undermines the *marchese di Roccaverdina*'s link with atavistic feudalism.

[3] Capuana, *Rassegnazione*, p. 75.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## 1. Works by Luigi Capuana

### NOVELS

*Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, ed. by Marina Paglieri, introd. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1980) (see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Giacinta*, 2nd edn (Catania: Giannotta, 1886)

*Giacinta ed altri racconti*, ed. by Geno Pampaloni (Florence: Vallecchi, 1972) (contains repr. of the 3rd edn of *Giacinta* (1889) and of the 4th edn of *Profumo* (1900); see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, introd. by Gilberto Finzi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991) (repr. of 1st edn of 1901; see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Rassegnazione* (Milan: Treves, 1907)

*La sfinge: racconto*, *Nuova antologia*, 59 (1895), 60-76, 274-88, 475-89, 661-82

### SHORT STORIES AND SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS

*Anime a nudo*, 4th edn (Rome: Società Editrice Nazionale, [n.d.]) (1st edn: 1900)

*Il benefattore* (Milan: Aliprandi, 1901)

*Il braccialetto* (Milan: Brigola, 1898)

'Confessione: novella', *Nuova antologia*, 34 (1891), 459-73

*Fausta Bragia e altre novelle* (Catania: Giannotta, 1897)

*Figure intraviste* (Rome: Voghera, 1908)

*Nuove paesane* (Turin: Roux Frassati, 1898)

*Le paesane*, ed. by Edoardo Villa (Milan: Marzorati, 1974) (repr. of 1st edn of 1894; see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Passa l'amore* (Milan: Treves, 1908)

*Le più belle novelle*, selected and introd. by Lucio D'Ambra (Palermo: Sandron, 1939) (see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti, 3 vols (Rome: Salerno, 1973-74) (see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

## THEATRE

*Gastigo*, *Nuova antologia*, 95 (1900), 483-97

*Giacinta: commedia in 5 atti* (Catania: Giannotta, 1889)

*Malìa*, in Luigi Capuana, *Le paesane*, ed. by Edoardo Villa (Milan: Marzorati, 1974), pp. 303-47

## VERSE

*Semiritmi*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Naples: Guida, 1972) (repr. of 1st edn of 1888; see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

## WORKS FOR CHILDREN

*Re Bracalone* (Florence: Bemporad, 1905)

*Tutte le fiabe*, ed. by Maurizio Vitta, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1983)

## CRITICISM

'L'arte e la vita', *Nuova antologia*, 118 (1905), 217-25

*Cronache letterarie* (Catania: Giannotta, 1899)

*Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, ed. by Giorgio Luti (Milan: Fabbri, 1973) (repr. of 1st edn of 1898) (see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Libri e teatro* (Catania: Giannotta, 1892)

*Per l'arte*, ed. by Riccardo Scrivano (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1994) (repr. of 1st edn of 1884; see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

'Rassegna drammatica', *La nazione*, 26 November 1866

*Scritti critici*, ed. and introd. by Ermanno Scuderi (Catania: Giannotta, 1972)

*Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea: prima serie* (Milan: Brigola, 1880)

*Studii* [*sic*] *sulla letteratura contemporanea: seconda serie*, ed. by Paola Azzolini (Naples: Liguori, 1988) (repr. of 1st edn of 1882; see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

*Il teatro italiano contemporaneo: saggi critici* (Palermo: Pedone Lauriel, 1872)

*Verga e D'Annunzio*, ed. by Mario Pomilio (Bologna: Cappelli, 1972) (see also under 'Works on Luigi Capuana')

## CORRESPONDENCE

*Capuana e De Roberto*, ed. by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 1984)

*Carteggio inedito*, ed. by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà (Catania: Giannotta, 1971)

## VARIOUS

*Capuana inedito*, ed. by Alfredo Barbina (Bergamo: Minerva Italica, 1974)

*Inediti e archetipi di Luigi Capuana*, ed. by Giovanna Finocchiaro Chimirri (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979)

## 2. Works on Luigi Capuana

Arrighi, Paul, 'Capuana et les deux versions de Giacinta', in *Mélanges de philologie, d'histoire et de littérature offerts à Henri Hauvette* (Paris: Les Presses Françaises, 1934), 786-95

Azzolini, Paola, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Studii* [*sic*] *sulla letteratura contemporanea: seconda serie*, ed. by Paola Azzolini (Naples: Liguori, 1988), pp. VII-XXXIX

Azzolini, Paola, 'Un idillio naturalista: *Profumo* di Luigi Capuana', *Lettere italiane*, 36 (1984), 319-38

Barbina, Alfredo, 'Capuana, Pirandello e un romanzo', *Giornale italiano di filologia*, 23 (1971), 141-51

Barbina, Alfredo, 'Due ipotesi di lavoro del Capuana', *Critica letteraria*, 6 (1978), 285-97

Barnaby, Paul, 'Capuana's Giacinta: A Reformed Character?', *The Italianist*, 11 (1991), 70-89

Caccia, Ettore, 'Luigi Capuana', in *Letteratura italiana: i minori*, 4 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1961-62), IV (1962), 2897-2927

Cappello, Angelo Piero, *Invito alla lettura di Capuana* (Milan: Mursia, 1994)

*Capuana verista: atti dell'incontro di studio, Catania, 29-30 ottobre 1982* (Catania: Biblioteca della Fondazione Verga, 1984)

Croce, Benedetto, 'Luigi Capuana', in Benedetto Croce, *La letteratura della nuova Italia: saggi critici*, 6 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1914-40), III (1915), 101-18

D'Ambra, Lucio, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Le più belle novelle*, selected and introd. by Lucio D'Ambra (Palermo: Sandron, 1939), pp. I-XXXIX

Davico Bonino, Guido, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta: secondo la prima edizione del 1879*, ed. by Marina Paglieri, introd. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1980), pp. V-XXV

Davies, Judith, *The Realism of Luigi Capuana: Theory and Practice in the Development of Late Nineteenth-Century Italian Narrative* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979)

Di Blasi, Corrado, *Luigi Capuana: vita, amicizie, relazioni letterarie* (Mineo: Biblioteca Capuana, 1954)

Finzi, Gilberto, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, introd. by Gilberto Finzi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), pp. 5-23

Fleres, Ugo, 'Per Luigi Capuana', *Nuova antologia*, 181 (1916), 80-91

Ghidetti, Enrico, 'Il destino di Giacinta', in Enrico Ghidetti, *L'ipotesi del realismo: Capuana, Verga, Valera e altri* (Padua: Liviana, 1982), pp. 59-74 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture')

Ghidetti, Enrico, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti, 3 vols (Rome: Salerno, 1973-74), I (1973), IX-LVI (repr. as 'Il demonio della novella', in *L'ipotesi del realismo*, pp. 75-123)

Ghidetti, Enrico, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Semiritmi*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Naples: Guida, 1972) (repr. as '"A semiuomini, semiritmi!"', in *L'ipotesi del realismo*, pp. 125-53)

Ghidetti, Enrico, 'Su Capuana romanziere', *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 97.3 (September-December 1993), 35-51

Giannessi, Ferdinando, 'Luigi Capuana: *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', *Nuova antologia*, 481 (1961), 550-52

Longo, Stefano, 'Capuana tra positivismo e idealismo', *Critica letteraria*, 6 (1978), 101-29

Longo, Stefano, 'Rassegna di studi su Luigi Capuana critico', *Critica letteraria*, 4 (1976), 543-66

Lucini, Gian Pietro, '*La sfinge*', in Gian Pietro Lucini, *Scritti critici*, ed. by Luciana Martinelli (Bari: De Donato, 1971), pp. 15-17

Luti, Giorgio, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, ed by Giorgio Luti (Milan: Fabbri, 1973), pp. VII-XXVIII

Madrignani, Carlo A., *Capuana e il naturalismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1970)

Marchese, Giuseppe, *Capuana poeta della vita* (Palermo: Andò, 1964)

Mazzamuto, Pietro, 'Capuana critico militante', in *Letteratura italiana: i critici*, 5 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1969), II, 965-96

Merolla, Riccardo, 'Luigi Capuana', in *La ricerca letteraria nell'età del positivismo*, ed. by Riccardo Merolla, Storia e antologia della letteratura italiana, 18.2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), pp. 14-36 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture')

Musumarra, Carmelo, 'Capuana critico', *Cultura e scuola*, no. 21 (January-March 1967), 73-80

Navarria, Aurelio, 'Le "formole metafisiche" di Luigi Capuana', *Letteratura*, no. 91-92 (January-June 1968), 68-74

Norman, Hilda, L., 'The Scientific and the Pseudo-Scientific in the Works of Luigi Capuana', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, 53 (1938), 869-85

Ojetti, Ugo, 'Luigi Capuana', in Ugo Ojetti, *Alla scoperta dei letterati* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1946), pp. 228-38 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture')

Oliva, Gianni, *Capuana in archivio* (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 1979)

Padovani, Gisella, 'Capuana e il suo pubblico', *Critica letteraria*, 19 (1991), 133-43

Pagliaro, Annamaria, 'Aspetti tecnici e continuità tematica ne *La Sfinge* di Luigi Capuana', *Spunti e ricerche*, 4 (1988-89), 63-82

Pampaloni, Geno, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Giacinta ed altri racconti* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1972), pp. 5-21

Panzacchi, Enrico, '*Giacinta* di Luigi Capuana', *Nuova antologia*, 16 (1879), 373-78

Panzacchi, Enrico, '*Il marchese di Roccaverdina*', *Nuova antologia*, 94 (1901), 82-88

Patruno, Maria Luisa, 'Arte e scienza nella teoria letteraria di Luigi Capuana', in Maria Luisa Patruno, *Teorie e forme della letteratura verista: Capuana, Verga, Betteloni* (Manduria: Lacaita, 1985), pp. 29-76 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture')

Pellizzari, Achille, *Il pensiero e l'arte di Luigi Capuana* (Naples: Francesco Perrella, 1919)

Piccone, Michelangelo, and Enrica Rossetti, eds, *L'illusione della realtà: studi su Luigi Capuana: atti del convegno di Montreal, 16-18 marzo 1989* (Rome: Salerno, 1990)

Pinagli, Palmiro M., 'La critica di Luigi Capuana', *Rivista di studi crociani*, 4 (1967), 308-24, 409-26

Pomilio, Mario, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Verga e D'Annunzio*, ed. by Mario Pomilio (Bologna: Cappelli, 1972), pp. 5-50

Portinari, Folco, 'Il verismo squagliato', in Folco Portinari, *Le parabole del reale: romanzi italiani dell'Ottocento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), pp. 217-24 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

Pullini, Giorgio, 'Capuana: "*Rassegnazione*" tra inetti e superuomini', in Giorgio Pullini, *Tra esistenza e coscienza: narrativa e teatro del '900* (Milan: Mursia, 1986), pp. 113-37

Ragonese, Gaetano, 'Capuana tra positivismo e naturalismo: *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo*', in *Letteratura e critica: studi in onore di Natalino Sapegno*, 5 vols (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974-79), II (1975), 703-720

Raya, Gino, *Bibliografia di Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Ciranna, 1969)

Raya, Gino, *Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Ciranna, 1966)

Raya, Gino, *Ottocento inedito* (Rome: Ciranna, 1960)

Renda, Umberto, and Piero Operti, 'Luigi Capuana', in Umberto Renda and Piero Operti, *Dizionario storico della letteratura italiana*, 3rd edn (Turin: Paravia, 1952), pp. 232-34

Rossetti, Enrico, 'Capuana e l'impersonalità', *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 2 (1981), 78-90

Russo, Luigi, 'Luigi Capuana', in Luigi Russo, *I narratori* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987), pp. 67-68

Santangelo, Vincenzo, *Luigi Capuana e i suoi critici* (Rome, Ciranna, 1968)

Scalia, S. Eugene, *Luigi Capuana and his Times* (New York: Vanni, 1952)

Scarano, Emanuella, and others, *Novelliere impenitente: studi su Luigi Capuana* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1985)

Scrivano, Riccardo, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Per l'arte*, ed. by Riccardo Scrivano (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1994), pp. 5-16

Scuderi, Ermanno, 'Capuana critico', *Letterature moderne*, 1 (1962), 47-55 (repr. as Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Scritti critici*, ed. and introd. by Ermanno Scuderi (Catania: Giannotta, 1972), pp. 9-21)

Sipala, Paolo Maria, *Capuana e Pirandello: storia e testi di una relazione letteraria* (Catania: Bonanno, 1974)

Storti Abate, Anna, *Introduzione a Capuana* (Bari: Laterza, 1989)

Tonelli, Luigi, 'Il carattere e l'opera di Luigi Capuana', *Nuova antologia*, 259 (1928), 5-18

Traversa, V. P., *Luigi Capuana Critic and Novelist* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968)

Trombatore, Gaetano, 'La critica di Luigi Capuana e la poetica del verismo', in Gaetano Trombatore, *Riflessi letterari del Risorgimento in Sicilia* (Palermo: Manfredi, 1967), pp. 75-106 (see also under 'Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture')

Verga, Giovanni, *Lettere a Luigi Capuana*, ed. by Gino Raya (Florence: Le Monnier, 1975)

Vetro, Pietro, *Luigi Capuana: la vita e le opere* (Catania: Studio Editoriale Moderno, 1922)

Villa, Edoardo, Introduction to Luigi Capuana, *Le paesane*, ed. by Edoardo Villa (Milan: Marzorati, 1974), pp. 5-109

Walker, E. A., 'Structural Techniques in Luigi Capuana's Novels', *Italica*, 42 (1965), 265-75

Zangara, Mario, *Luigi Capuana* (Catania: La Navicella, 1964)

## 3. Works on Late Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture

Amici, Gualtiero, *Narratori italiani da Verga alla neo avanguardia* (Bologna: Ponte Nuovo, 1973) (see, in particular, pp. 9-28)

Arcoleo, Giorgio, *Letteratura contemporanea in Italia: appunti* (Naples: Perrotti, 1875)

Arrighi, Paul, *Le Vérisme dans la prose narrative italienne* (Paris: Boivin, 1937)

Battistini, Andrea, and Ezio Raimondi, 'Retoriche e poetiche dominanti', in *Letteratura italiana*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Einaudi, 1982- ), IV (1984), 5-339 (see, in particular, pp. 222-79)

Bertacchini, Renato, ed., *Documenti e prefazioni del romanzo dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Studium, 1969) (see, in particular, pp. 223-80)

Bertacchini, Renato, *Il romanzo italiano dell'Ottocento: dagli scottiani a Verga*, 2nd edn (Rome: Studium, 1964) (see, in particular, pp. 109-94)

Bigazzi, Roberto, *I colori del vero: vent'anni di narrativa, 1860-1880* (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1969)

Binni, Walter, *La poetica del decadentismo*, 2nd edn (Florence: Sansoni, 1949)

Birkett, Jennifer, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914* (London: Quartet, 1986)

Bruni, F., 'Sondaggi su lingua e tecnica narrativa del verismo', in *Cultura meridionale e letteratura italiana: i modelli narrativi dell'età moderna. Atti dell'XI Congresso dell'Associazione Internazionale per gli Studi di Lingua e Letteratura Italiana*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio (Naples: Loffredo, 1985), 489-547

Carsaniga, Giovanni, 'Realism in Italy', in *The Age of Realism*, ed. by F. W. J. Hemmings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 323-55

Carter, Alfred Edward, *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature 1830-1900* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1958)

Cattaneo, Carlo, *Scritti filosofici, letterari e vari* (Florence: Sansoni, 1957)

Cattaneo, Giulio, 'Prosatori e critici dalla Scapigliatura al verismo', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno, 9 vols (Milan: Garzanti, 1966-69), VIII (1968), 269-488

Cavalli Pasini, Annamaria, *La scienza del romanzo: romanzo e cultura scientifica tra Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1982)

Chamberlin, J. Edward, and Sander L. Gilman, eds, *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

Charlton, D. G., *Positivist Thought in France during the Second Empire 1852-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)

Citti, Pierre, *Contre la décadence: histoire de l'imagination française dans le roman 1890-1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1987)

Colin, René-Pierre, *Zola: renégats et alliés* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1988)

Crémieux, Benjamin, *Panorama de la littérature italienne contemporaine* (Paris: Kra, 1928) (see, in particular, pp. 30-212)

De Amicis, Edmondo, *Ricordi di Parigi* (Milan: Treves, 1879) (see, in particular, pp. 213-90)

De Sanctis, Francesco, *Saggi critici*, ed. by Luigi Russo, 3 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1954) (see, in particular, III, 234-99)

Di Pietro, Antonio, *Per una storia della letteratura italiana postunitaria: dall'Unità alle soglie dell'età umbertina* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1974)

Farnetti, Monica, *Il giuoco del maligno: il racconto fantastico nella letteratura italiana tra Otto e Novecento* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1988)

Ferroni, Giulio, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), III (see, in particular, pp. 315-546)

Forti, Marco, *Idea del romanzo italiano fra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milan: Garzanti, 1981)

Ghidetti, Enrico, ed., *Il decadentismo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1977)

Ghidetti, Enrico, *L'ipotesi del realismo: Capuana, Verga, Valera e altri* (Padua: Liviana, 1982)

Gioanola, Elio, *Il decadentismo*, 2nd edn (Rome: Studium, 1977)

Jeuland-Meynaud, Maryse, 'I modelli narrativi tardoromantici nella cultura meridionale', in *Cultura meridionale e letteratura italiana: i modelli narrativi dell'età moderna. Atti dell'XI Congresso dell'Associazione Internazionale per gli Studi di Lingua e Letteratura Italiana*, ed. by Pompeo Giannantonio (Naples: Loffredo, 1985), pp. 405-55

Knox, Israel, *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1958)

Leone De Castris, Arcangelo, *Il decadentismo italiano: Svevo, Pirandello, D'Annunzio* (Bari: De Donato, 1975)

Lioy, Paolo, 'I romanzi contemporanei', *Il politecnico*, 72 (June 1862), 253-78

Madrignani, Carlo A., *Ideologia e narrativa dopo l'Unificazione* (Rome: Savelli, 1974)

Mangoni, Luisa, *Una crisi fine secolo: la cultura italiana e la Francia fra Otto e Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985)

Marabini Moevs, Maria Teresa, *Gabriele D'Annunzio e le estetiche della fine del secolo* (L'Aquila: Japadre, 1976)

Marcazzan, Mario, 'Dal romanticismo al decadentismo', *Letteratura italiana: le correnti*, 2 vols (Milan: Marzorati, 1956), II, 663-896

Mariani, Gaetano, *Ottocento romantico e verista* (Naples: Giannini, 1972) (see, in particular, pp. 279-692)

Mariani, Gaetano, *Storia della Scapigliatura*, 2nd edn (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 1971)

Marzot, Giulio, *Battaglie veristiche dell'Ottocento* (Messina: Principato, 1941)

Mauro, Walter, *Cultura e società nella narrativa meridionale* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1965) (see, in particular, pp. 37-66)

Merolla, Riccardo, ed., *La ricerca letteraria nell'età del positivismo*, Storia e antologia della letteratura italiana, 18.2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978)

Momigliano, Attilio, *Storia della letteratura italiana: dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, 8th edn (Milan: Principato, 1955) (see, in particular, pp. 470-630)

Musitelli Paladini, Marina, *Nascita di una poetica: il verismo* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1974)

Nardi, Piero, *Scapigliatura da Giuseppe Rovani a Carlo Dossi* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1968)

*Naturalismo e verismo: i generi: poetiche e tecniche. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi, Catania 10-13 febbraio 1986*, 2 vols (Catania: Fondazione Verga, 1988)

Navarria, Aurelio, 'Verismo e veristi', *Letteratura*, no. 94-96 (July-December 1968), 123-28

Nicastro, L., *Ritorno all'umano* (Milan: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1945)

Nicolosi, Francesco, *Verga tra De Sanctis e Zola* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1986)

Ojetti, Ugo, *Alla scoperta dei letterati* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1946)

Patruno, Maria Luisa, *Teorie e forme della letteratura verista: Capuana, Verga, Betteloni* (Manduria: Lacaita, 1985)

Perroni, L., and V. Perroni, 'Storia de *I Malavoglia*', *Nuova Antologia*, 408 (1940), 105-31, 237-51

Petronio, Giuseppe, *L'attività letteraria in Italia*, rev. edn (Palermo: Palumbo, 1970) (see, in particular, pp. 719-75)

Pick, Daniel, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Pierrot, Jean, *L'imaginaire décadent (1880-1900)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1977)

Pomilio, Mario, *Dal naturalismo al verismo* (Naples: Liguori, 1966)

Pompeati, Arturo, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 4 vols (Turin: UTET, 1962), IV (see, in particular, pp. 482-554)

Portinari, Folco, *Le parabole del reale: romanzi italiani dell'Ottocento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976)

Praz, Mario, *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (Milan: La Cultura, 1930)

Roda, Vittorio, 'L'età del positivismo e del decadentismo', in *Guida allo studio della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Emilio Pasquini (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), pp. 419-55

Roda, Vittorio, *Il soggetto centrifugo: studi sulla letteratura italiana fra Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1984)

Rossi, Salvatore, *L'età del verismo* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1978)

Russo, Luigi, *Dal Manzoni al 'Gattopardo': ritratti e disegni storici* (Florence: Sansoni, 1981) (see, in particular, pp. 161-431)

Luigi Russo, *I narratori* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987) (see, in particular, pp. 33-120)

Russo, Luigi, *Ritratti e disegni storici da Machiavelli a Carducci* (Bari: Laterza, 1937) (see, in particular, pp. 345-65)

Sapegno, Natalino, *Compendio di storia della letteratura italiana*, 3 vols (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1968), III (see, in particular, pp. 257-333)

Sapegno, Natalino, 'Sicilia', in *Storia letteraria delle regioni d'Italia*, ed. by Walter Binni and Natalino Sapegno (Florence: Sansoni, 1968), pp. 751-74

Seroni, Adriano, *Il decadentismo* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1964)

Simon, W. M., *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963)

Sipala, Paolo Maria, *Scienza e storia nella letteratura verista* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1976)

Sisca, Alfredo, *Cultura e letteratura: rapporti tra cultura regionale e nazionale: Manzoni, Verga, Fogazzaro* (Ravenna: Longo, 1970)

Spinazzola, Vittorio, *Federico De Roberto e il verismo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961)

Spinazzola, Vittorio, *Verismo e positivismo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1977)

Tessari, R., ed., *Pascoli, D'Annunzio, Fogazzaro e il decadentismo italiano: irrazionalismo e crisi dell'ideologia borghese tra '800 e '900* (Turin: Paravia, 1976)

Tonelli, Luigi, *La critica letteraria italiana negli ultimi cinquant'anni* (Bari: Laterza, 1914)

Trombatore, Gaetano, *Riflessi letterari del Risorgimento in Sicilia* (Palermo: Manfredi, 1967)

Vallone, Aldo, *Il romanzo dalla Scapigliatura alla Ronda* (Genoa: Casa Editrice degli Orfani, 1941)

Villari, Pasquale, 'Emilio Zola e il suo romanzo sperimentale', *Rassegna settimanale*, 28 December 1879

Villari, Pasquale, 'La pittura moderna in Italia e in Francia', *Nuova antologia*, 9 (1868)-10 (1869)

Whitfield, J. H., *A Short History of Italian Literature*, 2nd edn, rev. by J. R. Woodhouse (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) (see, in particular, pp. 237-55)

Zappulla Muscarà, Sarah, *Federico De Roberto critico e traduttore* (Catania: Giannotta, 1973)

## 4. Works of General Literary Theory and Criticism

Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968)

Backus, Joseph M., '"He Came into Her Line of Vision Walking Backward": Nonsequential Sequence-Signals in Short Story Openings', *Language Learning*, 15 (1965), 67-83

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson, introd. by Wayne C. Booth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)

Booth, Wayne C., 'Distance and Point of View: An Essay in Classification', *Essays in Criticism*, 11 (1961), 60-79

Booth, Wayne C., *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987)

Bronzwaer, W. J. M., *Tense in the Novel: An Investigation of Some Potentialities of Linguistic Criticism* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1970)

Champigny, Robert, *Ontology of the Narrative: An Analysis* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972)

Cohn, Dorrit, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)

Devoto, Giacomo, *Nuovi studi di stilistica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1962)

Franck, Joseph, 'Spatial Form in the Modern Novel', *Sewanee Review*, 53 (1945), 221-40, 433-56, 643-53

Friedman, Norman, 'Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, 70 (1955), 1160-84

Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Jonathan Culler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980)

Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press)

Glowinski, Michal, 'On the First Person Novel', trans. by Rochelle Stone, *New Literary History*, 9 (1977-78), 103-14

Grivel, Charles, *Production de l'intérêt littéraire: un état du texte (1870-1880): un essai de constitution de sa théorie* (Amstelveen: Hoekstra, 1973)

Gullón, Ricardo, *Espacio y novela* (Barcelona: Bosch, 1980)

Hamburger, Käte, *The Logic of Literature*, trans. by Marilynn J. Rose, 2nd rev. edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973)

Herczeg, Giulio, *Lo stile indiretto in italiano* (Florence: Sansoni, 1963)

Lejeune, Philippe, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975)

Lubbock, Percy, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Cape, 1921)

Mendilow, Adam Abraham, *Time and the Novel*, introd. by J. Isaacs (London: Nevill, 1952)

Meyerhoff, Hans, *Time in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955)

Musarra-Schrøder, Ulla, *Le Roman-mémoires moderne: pour une typologie du récit à première personne: précédé d'un modèle narratologique et d'une étude du roman-mémoires de Daniel Defoe à Gottfried Keller* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1981)

Onimus, Jean, 'L'expression du temps dans le roman contemporain', *Revue de littérature comparée* (July-September 1954), 299-317

Patrides, C. A., ed., *Aspects of Time* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976)

Pouillon, Jean, *Temps et roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946)

Ricoeur, Paul, *Temps et récit*, 3 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1983-85)

Romberg, Bertil, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First Person Novel*, trans. by Michael Taylor and Harold H. Borland (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962)

Rossum-Guyon, Françoise van, 'Point de vue ou perspective narrative', *Poétique*, 4 (1970), 476-97

Rousset, Jean, *Narcisse romancier: essai sur la première personne dans le roman*, 2nd edn (Paris: Corti, 1986)

Segre, Cesare, *Le strutture e il tempo: narrazione, poesia, modelli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974)

Stanzel, F. K., *A Theory of Narrative*, trans. by Charlotte Goedsche, with a preface by Paul Hernadi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

Sternberg, Meir, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978)

Uspensky, Boris, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. by Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983)

Villanueva, Dario, *Estructura y tiempo reducido en la novela* (Valencia: Bello, 1977)

Weinrich, Harald, *Le Temps: le récit et le commentaire*, trad. by Michèle Lacoste (Paris: Seuil, 1973)

## 5. Cited Literary Texts

Bourget, Paul, *Un crime d'amour* (Paris: Lemerre, 1886)

Bourget, Paul, *Cruelle énigme*, 24th edn (Paris: Lemerre, 1893)

Bourget, Paul, *Le Disciple* (Paris: Nelson, 1937)

Butti, Enrico Annibale, *L'automa. L'incantesimo*, ed. by Giuliano Manacorda (Bologna: Cappelli, 1968)

D'Annunzio, Gabriele, *Prose di romanzi*, 4th edn, 2 vols (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1953)

De Roberto, Federico, *Documenti umani*, 7th edn (Milan: Galli, 1898)

Dossi, Carlo, *Dossi*, ed. by C. Linati (Milan: Garzanti, 1944)

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993)

Farina, Salvatore, *Capelli biondi* (Milan: Brigola, 1876)

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Faust der Tragödie. Erster Teil* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986)

Maupassant, Guy de, *Notre coeur*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Flammarion, 1991)

Maupassant, Guy de, *Pierre et Jean* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992)

Neera, *Senio*, *Nuova antologia*, 35 (1891), 300-18, 482-98, 685-708, 36 (1891), 64-83, 307-31

Oriani, Alfredo, *La disfatta* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1953)

Zola, Émile, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1966-69)

(In addition to the above, literary works were consulted by the following authors: Honoré de Balzac, Henri Becque, Paul Bourget, Enrico Annibale Butti, Giosuè Carducci, Benjamin Constant, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Alphonse Daudet, Grazia Deledda, Federico De Roberto, Denis Diderot, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, Gustave Flaubert, Antonio Fogazzaro, Théophile Gautier, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Rémy de Gourmont, Arturo Graf, Luigi Gualdo, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Henrik Ibsen, Fiona Macleod, Maurice Maeterlinck, Alessandro Manzoni, Guy de Maupassant, Octave Mirbeau, Friedrich Nietzsche, Enrico Onufrio, Alfredo Oriani, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Luigi Pirandello, Edgar Allan Poe, Édouard Rod, Roberto Sacchetti, Matilde Serao, Stendhal, August Strindberg, Italo Svevo, Ugo Iginio Tarchetti, Leo Tolstoy, Paolo Valera, and Giovanni Verga.)

## 6. Works on Hagiography

Attwater, Donald, *A Dictionary of Saints* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1938)

Bollandus, Joannes, Godefridius Henschenius, and Daniel Papebrochius, *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a Catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur*, 2nd edn, rev. by Jean-Baptiste Carnandet, 67 vols (Paris: Palmé, 1863-1925), XXV (1867), 390-402

Butler, Alban, *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints*, ed. and rev. by Michael Walsh, foreword by Basil Hume (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1987)

Butler, Alban, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, 2nd edn, rev. by Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater, 4 vols (London: Burns & Oates, 1956)

Coulson, John, ed., *The Saints: A Concise Bibliographical Dictionary* (London: Burns & Oates, 1958)

Delaney, John J., *Dictionary of Saints* (Tadworth: Kaye & Ward, 1982)

Farmer, David Hugh, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978)

Lazzarin, Piero, *Il libro dei santi*, introd. by Luigi Santucci (Padua: Messaggero, 1987)

Pitré, Giuseppe, *Usi e costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo siciliano*, preface by Diego Carpitella, 4 vols (Palermo: Lauriel, 1889; repr. Palermo: Il Vespro, 1978)

Roeder, Helen, *Saints and their Attributes: With a Guide to Localities and Patronage* (London: Longmans, 1955)

St Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, *The Book of Saints: A Dictionary of Servants of God Canonized by the Catholic Church*, 5th edn (London: Black, 1966)

# ERRATA

| | |
|---|---|
| Page 29, line 4 | delete period after 'that' |
| Page 41, line 7 | for 'innocenta' read 'innocente' |
| Page 82, line 32 | for 'la spontanea' read 'lo spontaneo' |
| Page 92, line 33 | insert apostrophe after 'E' |
| Page 107, line 5 | for 'peggio' read 'peggior' |
| Page 171, line 24 | for '*Beffana*' read '*Befana*' |
| Page 199, line 13 | for 'in' read 'is' |
| Page 202, line 8 | delete second period after '*Rex*' |
| Page 211, line 13 | for 'legge' read 'leggi' |
| Page 226, line 14 | delete second period after '*Rex*' |
| Page 233, line 19 | for 'legge' read 'leggi' |
| Page 256, line 7 | for 'realty' read 'reality' |
| Page 270, line 4 | delete 'is' |
| Page 271, line 29 | for 'we' read 'We' |
| Page 274, line 24 | delete comma after 'that' |
| Page 279, line 33 | for 'del' read 'di' |